

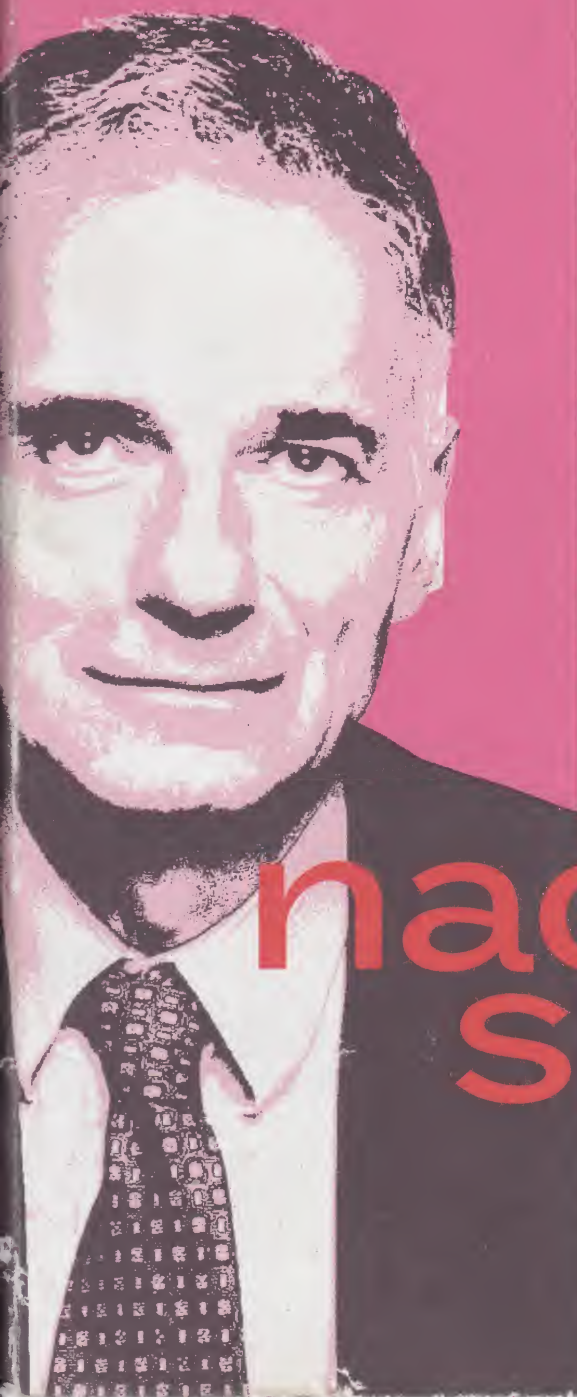
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PUNK PLANET MAGAZINE

\$3.95



issue #45 • September/October 2001



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shellac

double
trouble



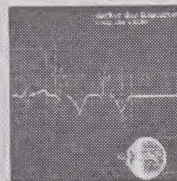
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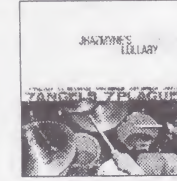
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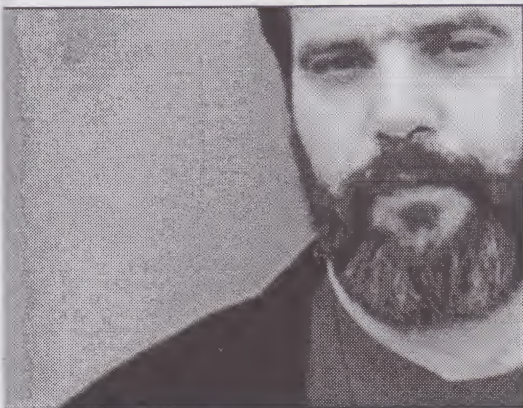
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Daniel Sinker
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Joel Schalit
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Eric Action
Scott Yahtzee
attentive listeners

Leah Ryan
tells stories out of school

Shawn Kruggel
new guy reads good

Jessica Hopper
puts our name in a .sig

Dan Sinker
Marianna Levant
Frol Boundin
Dustin Mertz
Michael Coleman
keep it real

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Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?
the risks

Everyone loves a good pariah. Or at least I do. When someone is despised for their words or their actions, it always makes me think "Hmmm . . . maybe they'd be good to talk to." And you know what? Quite often they are.

Don't get me wrong. *No one* likes an asshole. There's a difference here. Being an ass to be an ass, that doesn't take any work. Anyone can walk into a room, pass a little gas, and be generally disliked by all the folks in the vicinity. That's not a pariah, that's just stupid.

A pariah, to me, isn't someone that sets out to be disliked. It's just someone that's pushing forward in an unpopular direction because they believe in their work and fuck everyone that's telling them to stop.

Example? I can't think of a better one than Ralph Nader. Here's a guy who, for the last 30-plus years, has been a leading advocate against corporate control and for public access to government, and after waging a presidential campaign based on one simple truth—that both the Republicans and the Democrats are the lapdogs of industry—has been run out of town on a rail.

Sure, when you look at W bumbling his way through the presidency, you can feel for Nader's detractors, but those that vilify Nader overlook one simple fact: Nader didn't lose the election for Gore. I could trot out facts and figures that show over and over again that the slim percentage of votes that Nader received in 2000 come far short of the millions of votes that Gore lost among traditional Democratic constituencies, but this is an intro, not a term paper. Suffice it to say that Gore did much more damage to himself than Nader was able to inflict. But Nader walked away from the election a pari-

ah among many in establishment left circles. Sounds like my kind of guy.

Need an example a little closer to home? How about Shellac? Here's a band that is uncompromising about *everything* they do. They book shows, record records, conduct interviews, go on tours, and do everything else a normal band does—but they do it all by their own rules. Shellac makes compromises for no one, and in the process has made many enemies.

It probably doesn't help that Shellac's guitarist and singer is the notoriously outspoken Steve Albini, but to think that Albini calls all the shots for the band is to not truly understand the dynamic of this unique outfit. Collectively run, yet answering to no one, Shellac has built a loyal following over the decade they've been around. But they've built it without asking for anything from anyone, and that's made them unpopular in certain punk circles. Sound like my kind of guys.

So I figured, why not talk to both and stir up a little double trouble?

But there's a lot more than just pariahs in this issue. We have stories of resurrection, revolution, and recreation. It's a fun issue, with *tons* of different viewpoints—some you'll agree with, hopefully some you'll disagree with too. As always, everyone here has sunk a lot of work into the pages you're holding in your hands and I'd like to thank all involved for helping make this possible. And thank you for taking the time to read it all.

Have a great fall,

DAN

PS. See you next issue for Art & Design 2.

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*what happens next? "the second year" cd (625) - \$10.00



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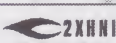
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THR1027 Hopesfall: "No Wings to Speak Of" CDEP

"Upon writing of the new material the band has taken another step into producing melodic, heavy, and more dynamic music that explores the boundaries and helps further the creative process. 'No Wings to Speak Of' has become more mature in the sense that it is completely linear and the transitions increase the fluidity of the songs, instead of blurring the focus. This is the band to look out for in 2001."



THR1023 Narcissus: "Becoming Leviathan" CD

"Narcissus' most recent release has brought them to an extremely challenging new level while expanding into the abyss of their hearts and minds, continuing to push the envelope. They believe 'Becoming Leviathan' contributes to putting the words, 'creative depth' back into music by letting the art speak for itself while taking on every emotion and feeling, whether it is love, pain, sorrow, anger or jubilation. This is the breeding ground for a new generation of rock and metal."



THR1024 The Operation: "There is Hope for a tree cut down" CD

"Their newest LP is the culmination of their recent years of hard work. The songs display a wide range and magnitude of vision unheard of for a band of their relatively young age. The album drifts along melodiously, interrupted unexpectedly by unforgettable bursts of calculated noise, sliding effortlessly all the while through complex and elaborate time signatures. Despite the undeniable power of the instrumentation, the highlight of the record is no doubt singer Greg Jehaniana's stirring vocals. His sweetly inspiring melodies soar far above the music, and the overall effect is nothing short of beautiful."



THR1025 Few Left Standing: "Wormwood" CD

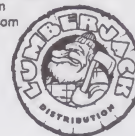
"Having already produced the likes of Elvis, it is no surprise that Memphis, Tn. has once again spawned another glass-shattering rock and roll icon. Few Left Standing is in the process of exposing the state of mediocrity of music in their modern day and age, while challenging that which is considered to be the 'norm'. Ready or not, FLS are prepared to throw the masses a musical lifeline that promises a divergence from the mediocrity while not straying too far from their explosive metal territory."



THR1026 Stairwell: "The Sounds of Change" CD

"Huntington Beach, California's Stairwell sheds the indie semblances of their debut album, and assumes a more mature, mainstream rock sound on 'The Sounds of Change'. Fueled by modern influences such as Foo Fighters, Third Eye Blind, and Superdrag, and 80's rock idols like AC/DC and Motley Crue, the edgy and energetic pop rock sound of Stairwell's three guitarists' is nicely complimented by refreshingly unique vocals and appropriately gritty backup harmonies."

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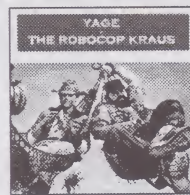
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ENGINE DOWN "under the pretense of present tense"
- LP ENGINE DOWN's grand album finally released on vinyl. the CD is on LOVITT. with people of SLEEPY TIME TRIO. awesome.
label: **EARTH WATER SKY**



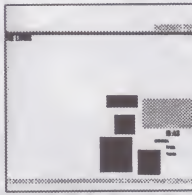
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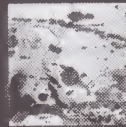
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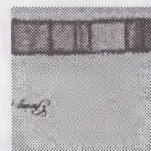
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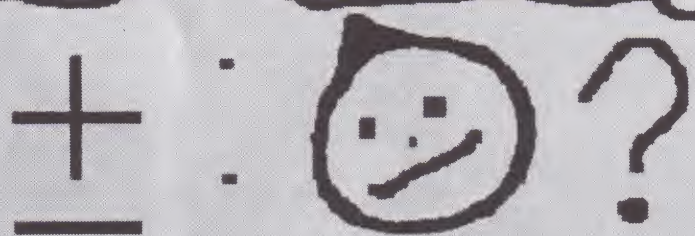
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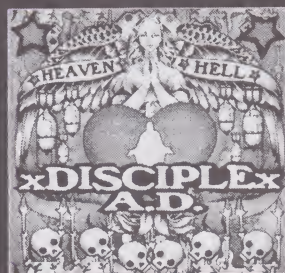
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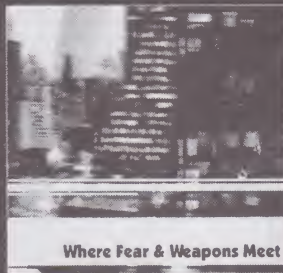


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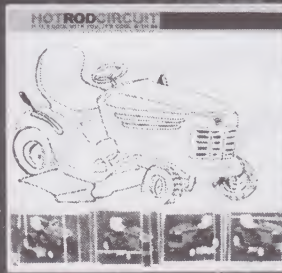
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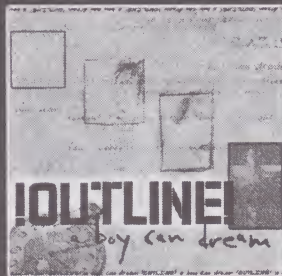
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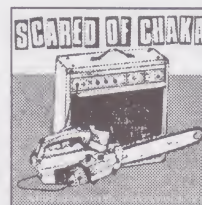
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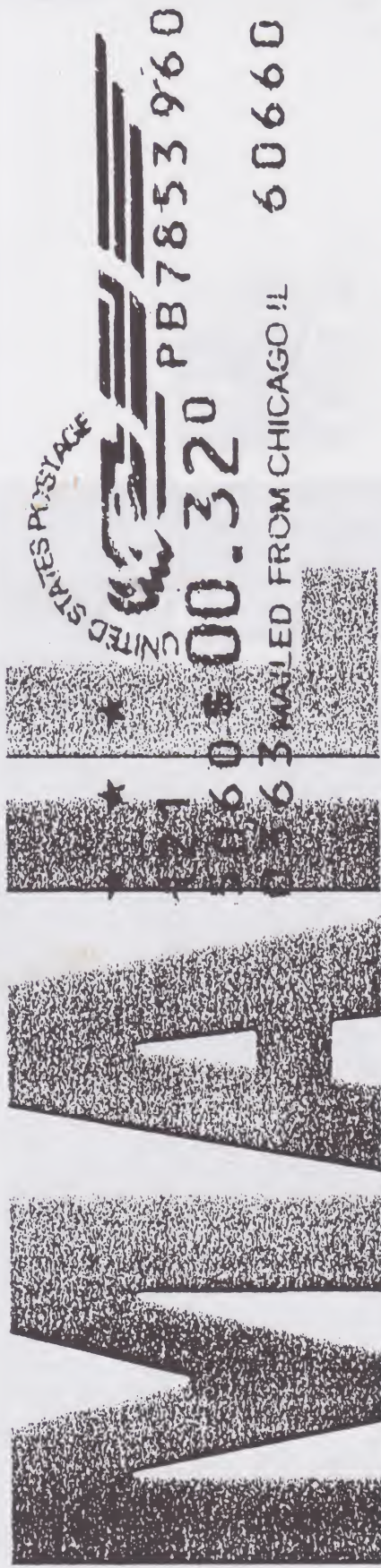
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Hopper's not alone.

Dear *Punk Planet*,

I have never been one for feminism.

In fact, I can honestly say that I never really understood what the big deal was until I headed out into the world as a professional. My profession happens to reside in the music business—like I could have chosen a more inept arena for my pre-natal feminist beliefs. The expression “lead the lamb to the slaughter” has never wrung so true. I know different now of course.

I just finished reading Jessica Hopper's *Punk Planet* column for issue #44 where she talks about being a woman (girl) in this nasty business that we call the music industry. Most of her brutally blunt points struck right through me like a sharp knife. Although none of the conflicts in her column were new to me, it was the first time to date that I had seen my daily battles screamed out loud, in the open, for all to see and hear. It scared me and made me sad in an extreme hail of frustration.

You see, this is not a one-time occurrence. I have to deal with this every day.

My third music-industry related job was the worst case of abuse thus far. The constant belittlement and disrespect I was subject too on a daily basis by my all-male colleagues was enough to drive someone to the brink of insanity. I was almost there too, but I resisted and wouldn't let them push me over the edge. They forced me out though—out of their “do the time and don't whine” indie stronghold. I thought music was supposed to be fun and uplifting and uniting. Not in this office—not ever.

More than this, I have learned that being a girl in this business is a novelty. We are the groupies, we are the ones trying to score a rock and roll boyfriend, we are out numbered and we are the dim-witted, airheads who really don't understand what the music is all about. I had an idea of what the music is all about, but for reasons beyond my control, they have been ripped out of me. I am tired and searching for meaningful reasons to remain a supporter of scene.

I have found that my only recourse to all this chaos is to trudge on and not back down from my dreams because of a few squinty-eyed dick heads. I am now the house-booking agent for a club in Vancouver, Canada as well as a freelance music journalist of sorts. (I use that term lightly.) It has not been easy. Fourteen and 15-hour days coupled with inextinguishable amounts stress has left me breathless. I constantly search for reasons to continue investing my time into this project called “live music”.

I have thought about this a lot.

My conclusion is that I am damn good at what I do—whether it be publicist, sales rep, booking agent, promoter or music enthusiast. Why would I let someone, male or female, stop me from doing something I can and want to do?

Truthfully, I haven't picked up a copy of *Punk Planet* for about six months. I'm glad I did today cause “Rip it Up” totally shed light on a lot of stuff I thought I was going to have to hold back from this music scene.

Thanks,

Tara MacDonald
Vancouver, Canada.

McPheeters, however, is.

Punk Planet,

Sam McPheeters's perception of critical mass as a parade of nincompoops [Columns, PP46] is grossly misunderstood and reactionary. I cannot argue with him on his points regarding *Adbusters* and PETA, although both groups still manage to create a healthy evaluation of our societal attitudes, systems, and traditions . . . well, *Adbusters* anyway. My larger beef has to do with his condemnation of Critical Mass.

McPheeters displays his ignorance of the complete dynamics of CM by generalizing the motives of the ride by a few sloganized flyers. Critical Mass does not exist with an encompassing agenda. It simply exists. Each rider is there to contribute whatever they choose to ride for. Some promote cyclist safety, some to promote sustainable travel, some simply for fun. And yes, some to protest car culture “destroying our social fabric.”

But each motive does not speak for every rider or ride.

This "no one reason" dynamic dismantles McPheeters's ideas that CM must be in Gary, Indiana and East St. Louis to be effective and worthwhile. Sure, it would be great if CM existed in those areas to express the issues of the people that can't afford cars, therefore can not get to work, but it doesn't have to. CM doesn't exist in those areas, not because activists or socially-conscience riders aren't setting up camp to promote CM, but because CM spontaneously arises by the citizens and riders of a specific community or area and the people of Gary, Indiana or East St. Louis are either dealing with more stressful personal issues, aren't aware of, or interested in CM, or are not interested in activism. It's not the fault of punk activists that CM doesn't exist in those areas, nor is it the obligation of CM to be there. And it should also be known that even though Critical Mass doesn't exist within Gary, Indiana, the Chicago mass has ridden there.

I don't at all deny that CM has problems in its, what some would argue, anarchist state. Some people are out to be confrontational with car culture, not realizing that those in cars are our allies, not enemies, and yes, some riders are misguided in their politics and actions. But these issues don't discredit CM as a whole.

If CM exists to simply give a sense of community to lone riders or to generate a good time, then it has succeeded, and anything more than that is up for debate, but can not be discredited as failing in its efforts, because having a group of people together on bikes and the motives of individual riders . . . it has no efforts.

Scott Spitz
Indianapolis, IN

Is Mr. Lady anti-trans?

Dear *Punk Planet*,

Your article about Mr Lady Records in the July/August issue [PP44] was completely one-sided and ignored a very important issue that many punks, queers,

and women have been at odds with Mr Lady and the Butchies over for years. This will be the third year for the Butchies and the first for Le Tigre to perform at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, a historic annual women's separatist music event. The festival has a "womyn born womyn" policy, which is a term that was created for the purpose of excluding trans women from the festival. Trans women have been forcibly removed from the land, physically threatened, and harassed by festival goers because of the hostile atmosphere that the policy tolerates and inevitably fosters. Although the festival organizers would never admit it, the policy cultivates a hostile atmosphere that refuses to accept trans women for exactly what they are—women. Over the years, the policy has loosened a bit to accept post-op trans women into the festival on a "don't ask, don't tell" basis,

The Butchies have been openly supportive of the policy (see www.strap-on.org/butchies.html to read their words from the summer of 1999), and at least one member of Le Tigre has been supportive of the Butchies' stance. While many performers at the festival have pledged to speak out against the policy from the stage or even cancel their performances, The Butchies and Le Tigre have remained silent about this all year long despite numerous attempts at discussion, constant awareness flyering at their shows, and mountains of letters from those of us who are so torn over the issue. I find it hard to believe that the author of the article could be so down with Mr. Lady and friends and not know anything about the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival controversy. Whether or not Mr Lady or the Butchies want to admit it, this has definitely been a persistent and visible issue of discussion in the queer-core/radical feminist/ punk rock/ whatever community(ies) for years. The author's complete omission of the massive con

The issue of transphobia in the punk community has been ignored for long enough.

Love,

Robin Jacks
Memphis, TN

What about the free DV?

Hi—

I thought all that stuff about digital video & editing was great ["Become the Media" PP43]. Now that the quality is beginning to get closer to matching film quality, any schmo can have access to the tools needed to make something goobers-at-large can understand and appreciate. Granted there's a bad side to this (even more self-indulgent crap — at least it won't just be coming from those with the benefit of trust funds!), but now the options are vast, and it's becoming increasingly possible to be a filmmaker without also being a salesman.

I would like to note, however, that since not every aspiring filmmaker can afford to get their own digital camera and/or editing workstation, a nice addendum for a future issue might be different outlets & resources for renting equipment and taking classes (I did note that some books and websites were included). Since I previously worked at Film Arts Foundation in San Francisco for two years, I freaked out that they weren't mentioned (nor was the more pro, but more expensive, counterpart, BAVC). For 25 years, FAF has made filmmaking affordable to those who want to make it, and if anyone has contributed to making a film and video a punk artform, FAF's got that award in spades!

yeah,

Matt Roberts

Someone is very angry about people defining punk—and defends his position by defining punk.

An open letter to Jon Strange, Jill Coyne, and all other pretentious assholes who pretend to speak on behalf of "punk":

I am getting so fucking sick and tired of two-bit pseudophilosophers pretending to be speaking on behalf of the so-called "punk community" or on behalf of "punk" in general. Are you Richard Hell? When you become Richard Hell, then you can talk to me about what "punk rock" is

supposed to be. Because it's supposed to be about music, you assholes, and not some asshole elitism.

I picked up Issue 43 of *Punk Planet* because I wanted to read the interview with Zinn (a genuine revolutionary who, let's not forget, has published under "major" houses . . . oh no!) and read about what's going on now in the music scene. But aside from a couple of very short interviews, the only copy about MUSIC was the fucking ads and a lot of very negative reviews.

Instead, the first thing I see is a letter from Jill Coyne [Mail PP43] whining about how punk is trying to break the "vicious circle of oppression" and "provide a voice of resistance to the abuses of linear power by society", not to mention "a reclamation of ones own power and spirit so that the laws of balance don't cause the victimization of others in order to feel worthwhile." What a bunch of bullshit! Yet to think otherwise, as apparently she felt Bob Conrad did, is "a coarse bundle of heresy," "the antithesis of punk," and even a "deceptively perverse display!" Fuck her! She does not speak on behalf of "punk."

Fucking come up with your own name for that bullshit (I suggest the term "pretentious elitist bullshit") and leave PUNK the fuck alone. Punk is about playing good fucking music, rock AND roll music, and doing it yourself. Doing THE MUSIC yourself. Punk is a FORM OF MUSIC; it is NOT this seeming religion you all advocate.

Jon Strange's column [Columns PP43] was even worse. He states his own exact problem, in fact the deep flaw in his whole philosophy, but basically ignores it otherwise: "We're so hellbent

on establishing ourselves as existing outside the rest of society that we lose the ability to talk to normal everyday people in any meaningful ways." That's right Jon, you certainly HAVE lost that ability. Pretending that everyone wants to live your life (secretly inside, whether or not they know it yet!) is a smug and elitist attitude. YOU DO NOT HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. YOU ARE NOT DOING ANYONE JUSTICE BY CRITICIZING THEM FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN YOUR BULLSHIT "REVOLUTION". We're glad that your friend Mike sneeringly refers to those who won't participate as "freight-hoppers to the revolution", but can't you consider that maybe we don't WANT to be a fucking part of your revolution, period???? YOUR REVOLUTION IS NOT PUNK ROCK. So fuck you and stop pretending like it's a qualification to be a punk to throw bricks at police, share dumpstered food, or "find any way to avoid the dreaded 40 hour work week" BECAUSE IT'S NOT.

There's one qualification and one qualification only to be a punk rocker, and that's to ENJOY AND PLAY PUNK ROCK. So fuck you. Just because you manage to live like a homeless person and still maintain an elitist intellectual attitude doesn't mean you have the fucking answers.

Why am I so angry about this? Because PUNK used to actually mean something to me! It meant simply "leading a joyful life" (something Strange also decries in his column) and listening to some fucking good music while doing it. Fuck ANYONE who says otherwise. That's ALL punk is about. Create some new term for your two-bit philosophy, like I said,

and stop using the word "punk". You've hit a dead end.

The whole punk culture seems to have been put on hold. Music has been stagnating. I blame this on the new emphasis on style over substance...that is, knowing how to be "punk cool" is more important than being able to make good music to many people these days.

Howard Zinn, the man I picked up the magazine for, said that not only should we challenge the orthodoxy of mainstream culture, but to challenge the established orthodoxy of our countercultures as well. And he's right. I don't recall anyone ever sitting down and saying this is what "punk" is, and then writing a political manifesto. Someone probably has, but that's just further evidence of how far away from the music punk has grown.

I don't know why "punk" is considered to be written in stone, and any dissenting ideas are labeled as "coarse bundles of heresy." That's bullshit. No one has to adhere to this philosophy to be a punk rocker, therefore your philosophy is only one of many tangents to punk rock itself. You can love capitalism, love your parents, even love America and apple pie, and still be a punk rocker if you can go out and play your own style of music. And fuck you if you don't think otherwise. You're the reason I've heard so much about the various "revolutions" as of late, but haven't heard any truly revolutionary punk rock records during that same time.

Ben Tokyo
Florida

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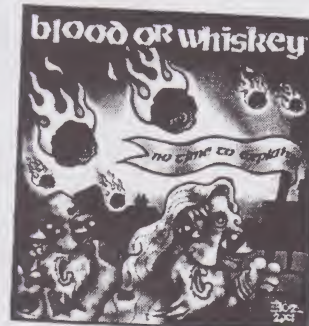
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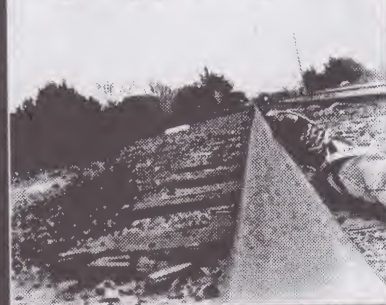
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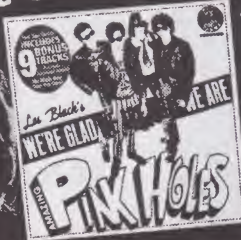
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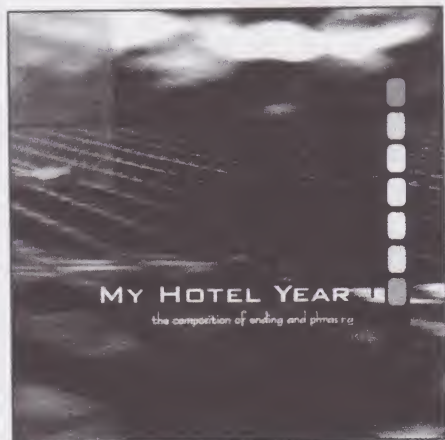
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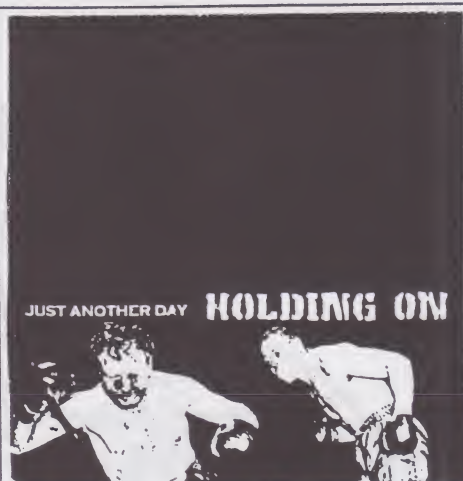


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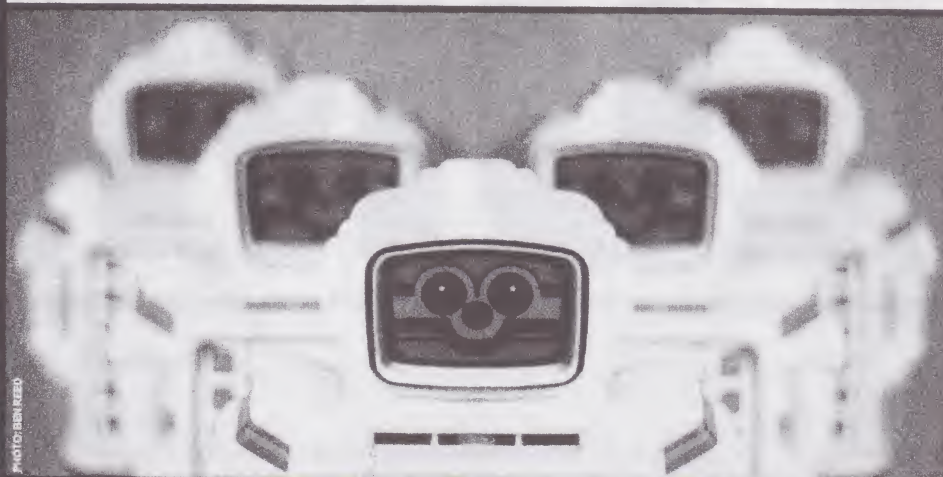
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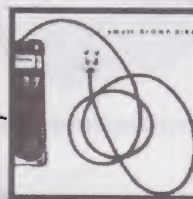
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OUT JUNE 26TH, 2001



COLUMN



One Year of Boring Magazine Subscriptions

There's a certain kink in interstate IO when one heads west into Los Angeles. You

crest a hill, pull northward and suddenly you're peering over the spectral skyline of LA. Depending on the day's particulate count, it can be a stunning view. You're also momentarily faced with what has to be one of the prime billboard locations in southern California. Ever since I moved here in late 1999, an Internet company called LoansDirect.com has monopolized the spot. For most of that first fall, the slogan on their billboard read, *think of us as your rate crisis hotline*. I assumed I'd misread it the first two times I had driven past. The third time made me think there was something fundamental I was missing about modern commerce.

The next spring I was offered some insight. A frequent flyer account magically surfaced (being, like karma or [and my prostate crinkles even writing this phrase] "punk points", something you think of as existing in an invisible bank account somewhere, accruing interest, until one day—presto!—you discover that it really was in an invisible bank account). United Airlines wrote to say that I had 9,000 miles about to expire, and would I like to redeem them for magazine subscriptions so they weren't wasted? This seemed suspiciously polite of them, especially in light of my not being able to remember having flown United. I was reminded briefly of those sting operations run by sheriffs' offices to catch gullible deadbeat dads and petty fugitives ("Congratulations, you are a winner!... Meet us at the corners of such-and-such streets to claim your new snowmobile!") Then I remembered LoansDirect.com and my desire for insight into the unseen. I checked the box next to every business magazine they carried—*Business 2.0*, *Business Week*, *Entrepreneur*, *Fast Company*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Industry Standard*, *Inc.*, *Inc Technology*, *Money*, *Red Herring*. At the very least,

I thought, I would be able to write an informed report from the world of finance journalism by mid 2001.

But there was wee insight to be had. Below the surface lay... more surface. I rarely found anything in any of these eleven publications to hold the interest of a non-MBA holding humanoid. There was a general impenetrability to the reportage that hampered my self-confidence. Well, you're wondering, what the hell did I expect? But I did hold high expectations. The *Los Angeles Times* business section, after all, is loaded with good stuff. You just have to know how to read it (meaning, the same way one reads the *New York Times* Metro section—with an eye for gross human misconduct). It was in the LAT Business pages that I learned of the 37-year-old finance advisor who bilked \$20 mil out of Phish and Leonardo DiCaprio (only to arrive at his arraignment with a stocking over his head). I also learned of the Iridium global phone meltdown, the guys who tried to con NASA by having gold spacecraft sheeting delivered to a strip mall suite with a sign on the door reading "Neutron Accelerator Project" (they were caught only after misspelling the word "sergeant" on a requisition form).

None of these types of stories make it into the modern American business publication. Instead, I got two basic types of reporting 1. Small Biz Success 2. Incomprehensible. The former featured many pictures of determined (and frequently ugly) people who had conquered some dinky, first world adversity to triumph as regional distributor of lawnmowers-by-internet / specialty hot sauce / llama feed. The latter featured amazing headlines like "the limbic slavery of the outernet", but never seemed to follow through with the great science fiction short story that should logically follow. The only articles I could wrap my brain around were those discussing the great villains of finance, and then only if there were pictures. I started scanning these magazines like a 16-year-old devouring *Tiger Beat* behind closed doors. GE's Jack Welch, slimy NY mayoral candidate Michael Bloomberg, Oracle's sinister and scheming Larry Ellison, ham-faced Ford CEO Jacques Nasser, and those two pony-tailed buttholes behind energy-broker Enron...were the only guys who held my interest.

MS PP45

Meanwhile, the magazines piled up. A half dozen of these slippery, heavy, richly inked bastards are spilling out of my mailbox every day. The people at my post office have started with those sharp glances that tell me I'm not fooling anyone. Our front porch has passed through the waiting room stage and now resembles the outer office of a hopeless crank, my obsessive removal of the paper subscription inserts has become a daily chore and I'm realizing... shouldn't these subscriptions have ended months ago?

Miscellany

1. I finally saw an Iridium satellite in person. It was purely by accident. I happened to be in the Smithsonian Air & Space museum last month (unknowingly on the first leg of a patriotic quadrangle that would take me to the White House tourist wing ["the jerk wing" I heard a fellow sightseer muttering on the sidewalk afterwards], the Empire State Building lobby and, by mistake, the statue of Uncle Sam in south Troy, NY). I was hunting for the Enola Gay. It's a testament to the greatness of the A&S that one could go walking its halls in search of a stray B-29 bomber, but I never did find the thing. In a certain room full of computers and doodads a friend tapped me on the shoulder and motioned upwards. There was the Iridium orbiter. Did Motorola commission a satellite especially for the Smithsonian, or was this one a factory mistake? It was a lot uglier than I'd expected, and a lot larger. And it certainly looked like it could kill the shit out of anyone it fell on.

The good news is, unless the one I saw comes unmarred from the Smithsonian ceiling, no satellites will be falling on anyone soon. Someone raised the cash to keep the things afloat (I know this only because I've seen the ads for renewed & improved Iridium service in my business magazines, not because I'm, um, obsessed with the story), one of many signs that the economy is still doing fine. In fact, my entire trip east seemed filled with such favorable financial omens—a) I was flown to D.C. by a UK techno act so that my band could open a vast & ridiculous show simply because the UK techno act had, like sultans of earlier centuries, *felt like seeing my band play and ordered that it be so* b) my hometown of

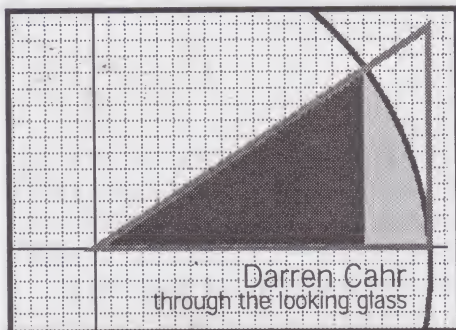
Albany, NY remains in the process of replacing its former downtown with a much uglier, more costly downtown seemingly molded from a single piece of concrete c) I passed several tons of new, expensive looking, stupendously ugly and completely unnecessary sculpture in the Providence airport, d) the only gutter punks I saw on St. Marks Place in NY were actually *talking on their cell phones*.

2. *Business Week* is actually a great magazine. I'm keeping my subscription after the freebie expires. It's a journalistically solid compliment to *The Nation*, only minus the wit & crusty crankery of certain columnists. Ralph Nader praised BW last year for a good piece on corporate welfare, calling the magazine "to the left of Al Gore". But then, so is *Tiger Beat* (or *Kerrang*, *Ebony* or *Consumer Reports*, for that matter).

3. The LoansDirect.com ad gets weirder the more I dwell on it. This wasn't a vanity billboard, and LoansDirect.com isn't some fly by night affair. By '99, this company had been in finance for 16 years (the dot COM was only a recent addition). A LOT of people must've signed off on an ad campaign directly poking fun at rape victims. What is the exact chain of events that leads to a judgment collapse of such magnitude? This last week I searched for evidence of the billboard in question, mostly to prove to myself I hadn't imagined it. I discovered that the "edgy" ads had indeed existed and incurred the wrath of many. Said an unnamed CEO, "we'd never seen it from the point of view that our consumers have seen it." But, of course, there's no other way TO see it. The CEO feebly added that the company's female vice president of marketing had approved the campaign.

(Writing this now makes me wonder why I hadn't complained my own self. After all, I'd seen this billboard at least a dozen times and the company's name is also their address. The only reason I could think of—and it's not an excuse—is that the sign was facing westbound traffic. By the time I was heading home, in the east-bound lane, whatever events had just transpired inside Los Angeles had pushed the controversy off my temporary palette and into long-term memory. If the billboard had been facing the other direction I would've been all hell-fired up the entire drive home.)

4. Of course it's not really interstate 10, it's *the* 10. As in "take the ten to the fifty seven to get to Disneyland." Apparently one has surrendered to California the moment they start adding "the" before the number of a highway. When I talk to east coast people now and make the mistake of saying something like, "traffic on the 95 clears up after New Haven", they say, "oh, so now it's THE 95?" with a curdled little smile as if they had some psychoanalytical knowledge of a defect in my personality I was unaware of and/or powerless over. Fuck off.



I keep hearing (as I'm sure you are as well) Iggy Pop songs used in advertising. This occurs now, I'd say, at least once a day, and my reac-

tion is that, yes it's wrong, but more importantly it's pretty odd. Not because the songs aren't good (they are), and not because I'm not annoyed that songs that meant something to me are being used in advertising (I am annoyed). Instead, I'm struck by the sheer inappropriateness of using an Iggy Pop song to advertise, say, IBM computers, or a cruise line.

When Moby uses a song in, say, an American Express commercial, I'm not particularly irritated. Moby, as talented as he is, has always been about superficiality—and not in a bad way. He plays with surfaces, and creates floating soundscapes that are interesting to listen to. He's not necessarily trying to make any larger emotive point with his music, and that's fine—there's a place for that, too. Indie bands like Don Caballero, gastr del sol and Tortoise fall into that category as well. They're creating intellectually compelling music, not emotionally connective songs. In a weird sort of way bands such as these are the thinking person's Kenny G.

Bands like the Stooges (Iggy's old band), or some of the better emo bands out there today, are about something entirely different. They're about ripping your head off and vomiting bad feelings down your throat. They're about stripping the pretense off of everyday interaction, and getting to the uncomfortable feelings that lay smoldering underneath. They're about kicking you in the heart.

When I hear "Lust for Life" or "The Passenger" used in a commercial, I wonder whether the creative director at the ad agency involved was smoking crack. Why would you put a song about, say, overcoming heroin addiction, in a commercial about a cruise line? To advertising agencies, all songs must now sound alike, which is (if you think about it) pretty sad.

The cynical among you (and that would be pretty much

everyone) would probably say that this is no different than Nike appropriating "Revolution" by the Beatles for a shoe ad. Yes and no. "Revolution" is putatively a sarcastic song making fun of people who think they're going to change the world. Therefore, using the song in an unironic fashion is similar to using "The Passenger" to advertise IBM computers. But I'd say that "Revolution" is, again, much more of an intellectual attack on hypocrisy—not an emotional cry for help, or a whelp of joy after defeating demons in your blood. Using "Revolution" is closer to using "da da da" by Trio in an ad for Volkswagen, or Cabaret Voltaire in a commercial for Pontiac.

While I will always consider rock and roll re-purposed for commercial advertising to be selling out at some level, at another level it doesn't bug me when the music made no pretense to emotional honesty to begin with. It's when a song was actually trying to accomplish something for the artist, and the artist prostitutes that sensation for purely commercial purposes that I get irritated. Even Green Day, as superficial as they are, are singing about Billy Joe's angst, and trying to come to terms with his inchoate anger at the world and himself. Thus, if I hear "basket case" in an ad for Budweiser I'm going to scream. Conversely, if I hear a song by, I don't know, Crazy Town, in an ad for Sprite, I won't care. This probably is somewhat inconsistent, but I can't help the way I feel about this kind of crap.

This position does, of course, create strange and unexpected results. I'm not offended if Bitch Magnet, or some other kind of 80s/90s "math rock" band, is used in an ad, because the music wasn't particularly interested in emotional resonance—just physical impact and intellectual fascination. Yet if I were to hear, in advertising, certain songs by any number of generic pop punk bands currently getting played on the radio in a town near you, I would not give the proverbial rat's ass.

So there you go—my guide to being offended by music in advertising. Roll your eyes at most of it, and keep a brick to throw at the TV if you hear a song by Fugazi advertising feminine hygiene products.



This is my column
Haikus capture
the essence
More than Music
Fest

Anticipation
will the fest be
wicked crunk
or just a bad time?

On the road to fest
Through the city of my birth
it's just a cornfield

Hair ladies ask Joan
 "What does your tattoo say, girl?"
 "Fort Wayne - Eat my ass"

What is Columbus?
 It is in Ohio, man
 Historical town

Multifaceted -
 Birthplace of aviation
 and the emo fest

Bring me to your pool
 Continental Breakfast!
 Fairfield Inn?—I'm there

Twelve hours driving
 We just got to the club now
 We find the crowd sparse

La Villa Rosa
 Faster pussycat next week
 for tonight, punk rock

Three days, forty bux
 It is just a metal bar
 middle of nowhere, OH.

What is apparent:
 Bad tats won't go out of style
 but won't get you laid

Black is back, Face it
 The hair is big, clothes is tight
 no one has on socks

Fest is real festive
 I'm out in the parking lot
 writing in haiku's

Owls are playing
 Better late than never - yeah!
 Kinsella screaming

Watch'd New Terror Class
 play "Slip It In" by Black Flag.
 What year is this, dude?

I fake-fight some boy
 Accidentally nailed him
 Oops! That's a nosebleed

What did I like best?
 When Milemarker played
 This is what I like

Who's got the dollars?
 12 tables of merch right here
 Let's consume it all!

Moss Icon is back
 Remember 1990?
 Thank you, Tonie Joy

Secret pool party
 We crash it; it's a mansion
 Our host: drunk goth girl

I sure did have fun
 This was my first fest ever
 Bye-bye Columbus



I had a strange
 dream about
 Jessica Hopper
 last night.
 Perhaps this is
 not the place to
 confess it. But,
 oh well: In my

dream, Jessica Hopper had sired an illegitimate child via one of the super-third rate descendents of John F. Kennedy, a Dweezil Kennedy III or something to that effect, whose existence she was deeply ashamed of. The reason for her shame had less to do with the Kennedy's, though, than with the severe deformity of the child. Basically, its rib cage was pivoted at a ninety-degree angle from head and feet, so that an arm stuck out from where the shoulder blades would normally be. The creature's general posture involved leaning back on this arm, so that with spindly legs it created a sort of backwards-leaning tripod effect on which it scuttled about. The creature's other arm thereby extended forward from the solar plexus into the air, where it usually flailed menacingly or (seemingly reflexively) performed a finger-ballet of rude gestures and unnerving twitches. The child appeared to be about seven or eight years old, but baldheaded and with the face of a ninety-year old man.

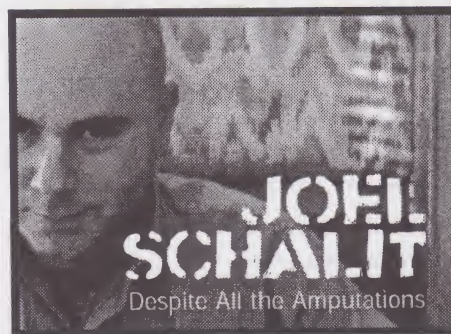
In the dream, I'm over at Jessica Hopper's house, a place I've never been, but in the dream it's a cluttered place filled with nostalgia items, layer upon layer of old party decorations and withered balloons atop wilted streamers in color palettes suggesting a strata of celebration stretching back from the present through the early '80s/late '70s. I don't believe this detail of the dream is meant to comment on some perceived holiday sentimentality on the part of Hopper. But rather, serve as an elucidation of the sad single motherhood being played out in the apartment, an evocation of the loneliness in birthday celebrations without other little friends, of special occasions mired in cobwebs and dust, forgotten but for these heart-breaking mementos cluttering the walls.

In the dream there are a few people over, and I appear to be at the tail end milling-about-the-living-room section of

some small, informal dinner party. I realize suddenly that the top layer of the wall decorations is a freshly taped up batch of cardboard jack-o-lanterns, that it's Halloween, and I wonder aloud to the dinner guests whether the young tripod creature son of J.H. is going to be taken out trick-or-treating. This elicits an embarrassed silence from the "in the know" guests and a pained look of mortification from Jessica. It is only then that it dawns on me that the mutated child is her secret shame, and that she keeps it safely hidden under lock and key to avoid the prying eyes of an unforgiving and chastising world. The creature shambles and burbles about, locked inside the confines of its tiny existence, oblivious to the idea that tonight is the night children all over America are given free candy at every door in celebration of their weirdness, their wickedness, their otherness. *No trick-or-treating for the young Hopper?* I exclaim. *Why, it doesn't even need a costume!*

I deliver an upbeat, After-School Special-like speech about it. I touch on the essential beauty within all creatures, how being different makes you special, not worse, how you can't live your life in fear and shame of what you are, and how tonight, of all nights, should be this child's special night. It's really pretty damn inspiring and uplifting, in the dream. Everyone at the dinner party is a little teary-eyed by the end, save the kid, who makes brr-rr-rrr truck noises in the corner. It pushes Mattel toys around depositing loads of fantasy-asphalt for some highway off-ramp it imagines itself constructing in the cobwebby corner of the cramped mausoleum of his/her/its life. Until, clearing my throat and blinking, as I try to keep from getting weepy with a halo of shiny, smiling, teary faces around me, I take the child by its little gnarled hand (the one protruding from its chest, so that with a good yank I've righted it to its full upright tripod position) and lead it to the door and out into the autumn night. It's brisk and nippy outside and I wonder if perhaps I should have gotten the creature a jacket (he/she is completely nude), but I don't want to let the magic of the moment escape me. And so, as we saunter forward I ramble encouragingly, explaining the complex set of traditions, the trick vs. the treat, the origins of the holiday in pre-Christian druidic moon ritual, the etiquette concerning which houses to target for loot, etc. We go door to door for hours ringing bells and demanding candy. People are touched, and clearly moved by the sight of the grotesque creature blinking in the unaccustomed glare of street and porch lights. They scurry back inside to prepare special treats for it, which they offer up, solemnly. I smile and nod, the surrogate parent communicating a wordless thank you several feet above the child's head. When I get home, I examine the candy, as the supervising adult is traditionally supposed to do, for tampering. In every single item I find a razor blade or poison.

A strange and perturbing dream. It's been haunting me for days—if anyone out there can offer me some sort of psychoanalytical insight please let me know.



How I Learned to Like School...

It was the very last ten minutes of my thesis examination. I was nervous. No one was saying any-

thing. The Belgian beer and the Chinese fortune cookies I'd brought for the occasion were all gone. My girlfriend shot me a curious look from across the table, wondering where my professors were going to go from there. Finally, the one instructor who had not asked me anything the entire time decided to break the ice and pose the final question. "Joel," he said rather coyly, "What do you think Marx would have to say about mysticism?"

Out of the corner of my eye I could see my Abe Lincoln look-alike of a Canadian thesis advisor smiling, as though he knew there was no way I was going to be able to answer this question. "C'mon, you know the drill Joel," he said laughing. Still, despite the warmth and the levity, I couldn't summon an educated answer. The only thing I could think about was that I'd gotten into graduate school already, and that this final question didn't really matter.

"Uhh," I stuttered, "I'm not sure Marx would have anything to say about it as a methodological problem," I finally replied. "At least in the way that such a question would be addressed in the philosophy of religion." Closing his notebook, the professor looked at me rather kindly, and let me go. "I think that's a fair response," he said with a grin. "That's all I had to ask."

While undergraduate thesis examinations are for the most part considered formalities that no one is ever supposed to fail, I couldn't help but feel humiliated by the experience. After all, I'd been passing myself off as a radical for years. Why the hell hadn't I done my homework and read my Marx? I mean its not as though I hadn't done that before. Where I went to school, he was as important to student identity formation as The Wipers. My first year in college I'd had to read *The Communist Manifesto* in an introductory political science course. During my sophomore year, I lived with a thesis-writing Trotskyite who it was impossible to not hear reading out loud passages from Lenin's *State and Revolution* to his freshman girlfriend in the bathtub every morning as I waited in line to take a shower. The best lessons in Marxist theory I ever had were those spent listening to this guy dictate while I shivered in the cold in my worn-out, flimsy cotton robe.

As tradition prescribes, I was asked to wait outside while the committee deliberated what my grade was going to be. I quietly smoked a cigarette while my girlfriend stood beside me, staring out at the school's front lawn, thinking how much I was looking forward to moving away from Portland, and going to work a day job in San Francisco before moving on to graduate school. I couldn't have felt more secure. I already had a job as a label publicist waiting for me, and I'd already been accepted to Yale for a master's in religious studies. And I'd just received notification that very same

day that I would be able to defer my admission for one year. I had exactly twelve months to flip out and be a weirdo before having to deal with Volkswagen-driving, longhaired rich kids again.

Soon enough, my thesis advisor interrupted my dreams of a new life with the news that the committee had finished their deliberations, and that they'd like me back inside. "Congratulations," each one of them said, "You passed with a B." I was stunned. "I got a B!" I thought as I shook their hands and absorbed their smiles. That was far too generous. They should have failed me. I'd done a terrible job on the project. I'd thrown it all together in a fucking month. But, as my girlfriend and I drove downtown to celebrate, it became clear that there would be no value in these guys screwing me over at the last minute. They'd been truly nice enough to realize that the cumulative efforts I'd put into getting my ass through school were more than adequate. They had no desire to see me spend another year at Reed trying to write the same three-chapter exercise in futility.

As we settled down to a very filling dinner of steaks, baked potatoes and beer, I could not help but think that I may have hated being in school. But, I would always be grateful that my employer-equivalents had chosen to use a different set of criteria than my final 'product' of a mediocre thesis on Jewish mysticism to determine my eligibility for post-college life. Somehow, I reasoned, if I was ever able to find people like that to work for in the real world, I'd be incredibly lucky because at every other point in my work life, it had always been the final results that counted. Not the cumulative effort and the personal growth that was expressed in sticking it out, as it were, and fulfilling the metaphorical requirements. This is not meant to suggest that I found everything about college to be utopian. Quite the opposite in fact. But in this one instance, I learned a really good lesson about consideration and fairness, and I've held it very close to my heart in all the years that have since followed.

Memories of this momentous day have been coming back to me a lot lately as I wind my final year of dissertation work down with wild anticipation about what the next phase of my life is going to be like. After taking my first set of oral exams last fall, where my very nice but hard as nails department chair—an Orthodox Jew from Quebec—said to me, "Mr. Schalit, don't you think your sentiments about the increasing visibility of religion in modern life are entirely and unwarrantedly contingent on your experience as an Israeli who has grown up in America?" I worry. Why should my so-called subject position matter? Well he's right, it always does. It's just a question of why it has to matter *then*. What worries me most of course is how many typically last minute, left-field questions I am going to be asked next fall when I have to go through yet another ritual of oral interrogation. I have this really funny recurring nightmare about being assigned an ex-Communist Astrophysicist of an external examiner who will ask me questions that I will not want to answer such as "Do you think that people who believe in astrology unconsciously construe the anarchic nature of the free market as being a mirror-image of

the naturally random order of the planets?"

Nothing can compare with the kind of fear that academic rituals like this inspire in all students, graduate or otherwise. Imagine having to answer a question like that. It's actually kind of cool. Regardless of how benign they might be, it's the 'vibe' they communicate that can be scary, not the actual question itself. Moreover, oral examinations ought to be a thing of the past, but they never are because they always introduce a certain degree of *je ne sais quoi* into the equation that I think universities truly relish because they are such hyper-predictable kind of places. Nonetheless, at this stage in my life I try not to rebel against such events too much because in my own weird way I've started to feel that everything is really like that. There's so much randomness in everyday life that as my elderly Holocaust survivor relatives in France have always said, *you have to be prepared*. I can't tell you how many times these past twelve months I've been faced with entirely new questions that were a lot harder to answer than anything I have ever been surprised by in school. Then why choose to worry about what the next and final oral ritual might have in store for me?

Because I'm looking for a way to rationalize my labor experience as a student in order to make my education something I can truly apply to the rest of my life. Long after the formal book learning process is done and I can analyze nothing more than a concert listing in the newspaper. I want to be able to say that I responded nicely and I behaved reasonably, even though, I might have totally disagreed with a person responsible for letting me move on with my life. Most importantly, I want to be judged for having been fair. For all those old fashioned folks who can't see what the value of doing things like studying political philosophy can serve in a labor market where meaningful employment doing things you that like has been a thing of the past forever, I see something incredibly life-affirming about learning how to be like that. If getting nervous in front of a guy asking you to unlock the economic meaning of a rudderless asteroid is the price you have to pay to justify eight years reading books, I'll willingly do it. Why?

No matter how difficult the experience has been—from the mean-spirited competitiveness of many of my overly professionalized classmates to my increasing sense that intellectual labor has no economic or cultural value—my education has still been the fairest shake I've ever gotten out of the job market. Sure, my studies have inhibited me from prospering financially. While I continued to read my Marx, my college friends cashed in on the so-called new economy. I totally missed the boat and all the BMWs. But in return I gave myself the time to learn how to think and to write, to work with people who, like my professors, with all of their awkward institutional rites of passage, still know what it means to respect work as though it were a process and not necessarily a product. I hope their unique example comes in handy when I have to look for their equivalents outside the university, or god forbid, I do what I have always said I would not—become a professor myself. Until then—and until the end of my thesis writing period is over—I feel safe to say that I'm satisfied.



Excuse me, but has anyone seen Ralph Nader?

You know the guy, right? Dresses mostly in black, soft-spoken yet persistent, with

the dour but sincere demeanor of a door-to-door Bible salesman?

Last year it seemed you could hardly avoid him. While voters dithered over whether to stick with the devil they knew or choose a brand new devil, Ralph was running around telling people that they didn't have to deal with the devil at all.

Vote for me, he said, and we'll have a whole new kind of politics. He admitted he didn't stand a chance in hell of getting elected, but that didn't matter because there wasn't a dime's worth of difference between the two guys who did.

Enough people bought that message to tip the balance from the old devil to a whole new one. A number of them have since expressed surprise that the new devil was, well, rather bad.

But Ralph himself? The fellow who was going to be in the forefront of building not just a new political party, but a grass roots movement that was going to change American politics forever? He seems to have dropped off the face of the earth.

He did surface briefly, long enough to publish a couple articles explaining that it wasn't his fault George Bush was president, and even expressing a bit of outrage over Bush's attempts to multiply oil company profits by destroying what was left of the environment.

Apart from that? Nothing. If Ralph's Green Party has been organizing local chapters, choosing candidates for next year's elections, registering voters, mounting demonstrations, well, they've managed to keep it a secret. And they've been doing it with little help from Ralph himself. One begins to suspect that the evangelist of change was peddling snake oil instead of salvation.

One drawback in writing about current events is that by the time the article appears in print, things may have happened that totally invalidate what was written a month or two earlier. Perhaps by summer's end, Ralph will have emerged from obscurity and set the political landscape alight, but as of mid-June, he's at least six months late in living up to his electoral promises. Just another politician, then? It's beginning to look that way.

Personally, I thought that Nader's run was the wrong move at the wrong time. With all of Gore's faults, even with the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of much of the Democratic Party, it still seemed better to muddle on with the status quo than to make a sharp right turn into the Reaganesque past.

Many intelligent people, including half my friends, disagreed. If not now, when, they argued. Change has to start somewhere; we could wait indefinitely for that nebulous moment when it would be safe to strike out in a new direction.

But where's that new direction now? Apart from a few half-hearted demonstrations, the opposition to Bush's radical restruc-

turing of America in favor of the rich and powerful amounts to little more than Letterman-style jokes poking fun at his alleged lack of intelligence. It's the 1980s all over again: liberals and intellectuals reassuring themselves of their own superiority by ridiculing Reagan's lack of brain power while he systematically and effectively dismantled social progress dating back to the New Deal.

George Bush, despite his Alfred E. Neuman manner and routine mangling of the English language, is anything but dumb. If nothing else, he outwitted enough of you to get where he needed to. He's already steamrolled Congress, as much as Ronald Reagan did, into passing an unnecessary and unwanted (by 59% of the American public) tax cut that will do even more damage to the social fabric of this country than his harebrained anti-environmental schemes.

Reagan's giveaway to the rich, coupled with his massive increase in military spending, plunged the US deep into the red, quadrupling the national debt, and serving as an all-purpose excuse for gutting social programs. That was the real point of the tax cut, then and now: not to hand back money to the rich, but to permanently cripple the ability of government to do things that right wing ideologues don't think the government should be doing.

In the view of the far right, government should stick to military defense, law and order, and removing all obstacles to the unfettered accumulation of capital. Since few but the most woolly-brained anarchists will argue with the first two of those priorities, the surest way to make sure that government doesn't go beyond them is to ensure it can't afford to. If there's no money to spare for environmental regulations or antitrust enforcement or unemployment insurance, then business is well on its way toward achieving the third of those goals.

So that's where we are today, or at least where we're headed. The only question is what, if anything, can be done about it?

The first and most obvious thing should be not to repeat the mistakes of the past, not, as Bush seems intent on doing, to embrace 19th century solutions to 21st century problems. If Bush wants to return us to the days of the robber barons and unbridled capitalism, much of his opposition is trying to resurrect some version of Marxism or anarchism. These two schools of thought have unleashed nearly as much harm on the world as the old order they purported to oppose.

Reagan came to power precisely because the American people felt that left-liberal policies weren't working. And they had considerable justification for that view: the economy was falling apart, energy and commodity shortages were becoming routine, crime was out of control. Reagan's John Wayne approach, combining simplistic solutions with an appeal to knee-jerk patriotism, was obviously not what was needed, but the left offered no alternative.

Unless, of course, you consider it an alternative to keep on doing what you've been doing, and when it doesn't work, do more of it. When you confront them with the disastrous record Marxism has racked up so far, leftists inevitably respond, "Oh, that wasn't real Marxism." With nearly a century and a half now

elapsed since Uncle Whiskers first unleashed his theories on the world; Marxism has yet to have a "real" outing, they insist. Strange, then, that capitalism, not a whole lot older, has suffered no such identity crisis.

That's not completely true, though. Right-wingers, not unlike their doppelgangers on the left, are forever insisting that all of our problems could be solved if we only got government out of the way and let "pure" capitalism work its magic. In this they share a common lunacy with their left-wing brethren: the conviction that repeating past mistakes enough times and with sufficient fervor will ultimately produce the correct result.

Leftists, and I imagine that includes the majority of my readers, will protest that America has seldom offered them a choice between anything but right wing and more right wing policies and candidates. That's partly true, but instead of blaming that on some vast conspiracy involving government, the corporations and the media, they might try examining their own failings.

Foremost among those failings is the inability to create a movement that makes sense to the overwhelming majority of American people. The ordinary people who, while they see many ways in which society could be improved, don't support jettisoning the whole system that has, for the most part, served them very well indeed.

Americans, like the English, are not a people given to extremes. Hell, even their revolutions were fairly sedate affairs, at least when compared with the bloodbaths that typically accompany the establishment of a new order. The only way a far-right or far-left regime is likely to gain power in either country is at gunpoint.

Clinton figured this out; it's the only reason he was able to get elected, by playing to the center of the political spectrum. The bellyaching to the effect that Clinton and Gore were "too right wing" ignores the fact that nobody to the left of those guys would have stood a chance.

Evidence? Okay, Nader was well to the left and got, what, 3% of the vote? The same argument has been going on here in the UK. The old lefties, who nearly drove the Labour Party into the ground back in the 1980s (and in doing so opened the door for 18 years of Thatcherism) put up a slate of traditional socialist candidates in this month's elections because they were cheesed off with Prime Minister Tony Blair, whom they see (correctly) as a Clinton-type politician.

The hard left promised a return to the glory days of the 1970s, when much of British industry was under state ownership. The trade unions called most of the shots, and, because of constant strikes, you didn't know from one day to the next whether your train would turn up, your garbage would be collected, or, by the end of the decade, if you'd even have electricity.

Surprise, surprise, the most successful of the socialist candidates raked in a magnificent 1% of the votes, and this in an election where everyone knew Tony Blair's Labour Party was headed for a massive victory. In other words, unlike the American election, any true leftist could vote his or her conscience without

risking putting the Conservatives back in power.

My point is this: if you're interested in opposing Bush's reactionary agenda, don't waste your time rehashing the past. He's already doing it for you. For some 20 years now, the Republicans have been obsessed with stamping out the legacy of the 1960s. If you insist on reliving the politics of the '60s, you'll just provide them with an easier target.

The only way to defeat George Bush is to outsmart him, and don't flatter yourself: it's not as easy as it looks. He snookered his way into the White House last time, and if his opposition squanders its energy on quixotic third party movements and vague, nihilistic crusades against "capitalism" or "the new world order," he'll have no trouble getting back in for another four years.

It might be more romantic, and certainly more adrenaline inducing, to dream of fighting those who can connect with the mainstream of the American people will win the battle. Balaclava-clad rioters are not going to do that, nor are ideologues driven by obscure theories that have never proven themselves beyond the classroom or the cafe.

Like it or not, for the immediate future, we're stuck with the two-party system that has dominated American politics throughout most of its history. Maybe some day it will be different, but my bet is that you're far more likely to see the Democratic Party pulled in a leftward direction through grass roots pressure than you are to see a successful left wing third party.

Anyway, it's time we moved beyond the old paradigms of left and right. In the early days of the German Green Party, they used to say, "We are neither left nor right, we are in front." It was arrogant tosh for the most part, like most slogans, but the idea was a good one. We as a society should have outgrown pre-packaged, one-size-fits-all ideologies, and be mature enough to pick and choose the best ideas, regardless of where they originated.

With that in mind, I'm going to offer a list of suggestions that I think any genuinely progressive political movement should be campaigning for, and which would stand a good chance of being embraced by a majority of the American public. Some of them would be considered liberal by conventional standards, others conservative. A few, you'll note, are very similar to those that Nader was campaigning for. We'll overlook the fact that by helping put Bush in the White House, he guaranteed that it would be a long time before they ever came to fruition.

To those of you itching to smash the state, these ideas may seem painfully mundane, and in a few cases, reactionary. So be it, any one of them, if enacted, will accomplish more in the way of an equitable and free society than all the marches, demonstrations, riots and bitter alienation the next few years are likely to bring us.

So here goes:

1. Reverse Bush's tax cut, continue paying off the national debt, and use the surpluses from the resultant prosperity to begin rebuilding the nation's infrastructure, with particular regard to education, transportation, and energy.

2. Raise the minimum wage to a livable level, at least eight to 10 bucks an hour. Nobody benefits from keeping people who do society's dirty work at near-starvation levels. Nobody earning less than \$20,000 a year should have to pay more than a minimal income tax.

3. Guarantee health care to all citizens, but NOT by way of the government-operated systems now failing in Britain and soon to fail in Canada. A better solution would be a cooperative effort between government and private insurance companies, which seems to be working very well in many Western European countries.

4. Abolish all race or gender-based affirmative action programs, and replace them with efforts aimed at recruiting and supporting talented students and employees who because of economic or educational disadvantage, may not have had the opportunity to reach their potential.

5. Set basic standards for literacy and numeracy, which apply to all students, regardless of cultural or ethnic origins. That means literacy in English, first and foremost. It is our national language, and anyone deficient in its use is going to be at a life-long disadvantage. On the other hand, all children, from elementary school on, should be required to learn a foreign language as well, except for immigrant children already fluent in their native tongue.

6. Pay teachers, policeman, nurses, and other vital public servants whatever is necessary to attract the best people to those professions. Require that they live in the communities they serve. And don't hesitate, union or no union, to fire them if they're not up to the job.

7. No political leader should earn more than the median wage of the constituents he or she serves.

8. Invest the entire national energy budget in conservation and developing alternative, non-polluting energy sources: solar, wind, fuel cells. Soon, maybe within our lifetimes, the world is going to have to get along without fossil fuels. The first country to learn how to do this is going to be at a huge advantage. It might as well be us.

9. Build a public transportation system, integrated with sensible urban planning, that makes it not just possible, but desirable to get almost everywhere by cheap, efficient high-speed trains and buses. Require that anyone who manages or works for a public transit system has to actually ride on it. Everyday.

10. Ban private ownership of handguns, and allow shotgun and rifle ownership only to those who are licensed and who've passed a basic competency test.

11. Zero tolerance for assholeism. Nobody should be discouraged from walking the streets of their own town because of thugs, lunatics, professional beggars, or, in sum, people who colonize public space in a way that excludes or intimidates others.

12. Parenting classes required for all mothers or fathers claiming welfare for dependent children. Job training or further education required for all those claiming welfare on grounds of being unemployed or unemployable.

I could go on, but you get the idea. No doubt you could come up with a dozen or more suggestions of your own, even if some of them are completely at odds with mine. What's important is that it's on issues like these that public opinion turns, not on vague, overweening calls to "stop capitalism" or "abolish the WTO."

If you want to change the world, you need to go where the people are, and for the vast majority of people, that is somewhere near the center. A life on the margins has its appeal, true, and it's equally true that many of history's most progressive ideas were developed by people who, in their own time, were considered borderline lunatics.

But at this point, being a "revolutionary" has become a cliché, with an identikit costume and set of beliefs readily available to any frustrated teenager with two bucks to spend on a fanzine. If you really want to change the world, you're going to have to do better than that.



01 January
2001 16:18

The New Year
had been ushered
in with a punk
show, tomato
pies, a big snow-
fight, and young

and old friendships. Fresh from our individual rounds of oversleeping, my new friend Greg and I were talking on the porch of my home-away-from-home at 2053 Cedar, Philadelphia. He was telling me the very detailed saga of his friend who was injured almost fatally at the IMF/World Bank protests in Prague. With tears in his voice he told me how resilient his friend is, how he knew she would make it through all of this because she is such a survivor, how proud he is of her.

As he finished his story, my old friend Tracy called me from Chicago. We hadn't spoke for months, but hey, it was New Years Day. That can count as one of those holidays where you think of people you have forgotten about temporarily.

After a minute or two of awkward small talk she told me in a shaky voice that Jenny Rose was dead.

When I got off the phone with her I was alone on the porch. I felt like I was in a horribly scripted teen drama. I just sat on one of the chairs and gulped in the wintry air.

I hadn't thought of Jenny in a little while. One and a half years before, she had left for Malawi, Africa with the Peace Corps to work on women's health issues. Occasionally I heard bits and

pieces of news about her from various friends and always made a mental note to myself to write to her so that we could make plans to travel together in Africa like we talked about before she left. The last time I saw Jonathon, her boyfriend of four years, he told me that they were not really in touch any more and that it was a long story. Since he was sitting with three of his friends and I already felt like I'd put my foot in my mouth, I figured I wouldn't push it by asking for her address.

I am arguably one of the worst people in the world at keeping in touch. I don't consider time or distance to be important factors in the strength of a friendship. Even if I don't see or speak to a good friend for months or even years, the instant we are together again it is as if we were never apart. Sometimes I drive myself insane trying to maintain contact with everybody until I calm down by assuring myself that sooner or later I will see people again, bonds of friendship intact. Unfortunately, I was wrong.

The rest of my time in Philadelphia was exactly the same and just as much fun as previous times I had been there. Lots of activity and commotion and people coming in and out of town. I surprised myself by feeling completely normal. After all, this was the first time that someone I was very close to had died. I was somewhat relieved that I was dealing with it a lot better than I had predicted I would. I flew back to Chicago with my friend Dave (with whom I had spent countless New Years) and made my way back to my one-bedroom apartment in Champaign by myself. The following days before Jenny's funeral were peculiar. I was completely alone with my thoughts. Memories and images relating to Jenny flashed through my head like commercials. She had already been gone a year and a half and I just couldn't comprehend the fact that she was not coming back from Africa.

Nobody had ever been able to tell her what to do. She was headstrong in a way that was annoying at times. I knew no other person who was so absolutely self-assured to the point that she would argue that two plus two equals five until you just got sick of debating it with her. It was clear to anyone that spent more than two minutes with her that she was extremely opinionated and determined and that nothing and no one would get in the way of what she wanted. She was a very outspoken feminist and dedicated most of her time, in all reality most of her life, to women's issues. Although she had some problems politically with the Peace Corps, she nevertheless chose to volunteer for its program in Malawi.

Jenny was so sure of herself, so in control of her life, that I literally could not believe she was dead.

One day I was doing the dishes, humming to myself, in a cheerful mood and her name suddenly pierced my otherwise blank mind. She was dead. She was really dead. And I finally believed it.

I agonized over the scenario of her death. I berated myself for having lost touch with her. Everything I saw, heard, smelled, felt, or tasted made me think of her. I kept seeing her in crowds, in store windows, in passing cars. Was I grieving or losing it?

08 January 2001 10:00

Another old friend, Dave and I went together to the funeral parlor. In the main room with her casket were a few pieces of posterboard covered with photos of her from when she was a baby up until a few weeks before her death. The instant I saw them I had to leave the room. How could I look at a picture of a little 3-year old Jenny smiling at the camera or a 24-year old Jenny laughing on the back of an ostrich not knowing she was to die in excruciating pain?

One by one all of my old friends from college walked in the building. We gathered quietly together, not really knowing what to say, trying to comfort each other. When Aaron came through the door, he saw us and stopped. "I knew this wouldn't be real until I saw all you guys."

Next to her casket were some large prints of black and white photos I had taken of her when we were sophomores in college. I had completely forgotten about them and was kind of taken aback when I first saw them. She was wearing a long white dress and the backgrounds were white. Each photo was a print of two negatives superimposed two Jenny's in very quiet, peaceful poses—quite uncharacteristic for her. It was eerie how otherworldly she looked, and even the atheist in me couldn't deny that she looked very much like an angel.

One of Jenny's aunts spoke briefly during the service. She mentioned that Jenny was in the third generation of Roses to die at age 24. Dave and I looked at each other, chills going through our bodies.

The most heart-wrenching scene I have ever witnessed in my life was right before her casket was lowered in the ground. Her parents were asked to approach the casket to have their last moments with her. Jenny's mother—who had been silent up to this point—stretched her arms out, wailing, draped her body over the coffin and started sobbing quietly. I could see her shoulders shaking until her husband gently pulled her away. Todd, Jenny's high school sweetheart, had his arm around me as the casket was being lowered. He squeezed my shoulders and whispered with tears on his lips, "This is the hardest part."

The mood at the reception afterwards at Jenny's parents' house was surprisingly light. Those of us there recounted stories about Jenny and made jokes about how she would have disapproved of the very non-vegan food at the reception. It was actually a very nice gathering of Jenny's friends and family and we quite enjoyed being brought together to honor, celebrate, and remem-

ber her life. The heavy, bleak, depressing tone of the service and burial seemed to have dissipated.

11 June 2001 6:58

It is months later and I am still dealing with Jenny's death in different ways. Every once in a while I get really upset and emotional when I think about her. I haven't really talked to anyone in detail about her death or how I was/have been dealing with it.

Of course everyone will think, 'It's just not fair,' when hearing of someone's death but I can't help but really believe that in Jenny's case. My sister brought up the example of a junkie ex-boyfriend of mine who overdosed an incredible twelve times in one year (and is still alive to my knowledge). She sounded indignant. "How is it that Brian, who has never done shit for anyone and is completely worthless, can survive twelve overdoses when Jenny, who spent her whole life helping other people, doesn't even get one chance?" Supposedly, one of the times Brian overdosed, he was driving and crashed into a tree, which happened to be across the street from a hospital. Jenny, on the other hand, was lying on a road with crushed ribs and slowly collapsing lungs for four hours before she died and the medics arrived something like 45 minutes after her death. I can't laugh even bitterly at the irony.

I am sick of reading other people's theoretical ideas about death and coping with death. "It's just a natural cycle of life." "Mourning is silly and self-indulgent; everyone has to die." I say go fuck yourself, especially those who have never actually dealt with a loved one's death. If it is comforting to think that life is a flash in the pan and death is not a big deal, I truly hope those thoughts can ease or eliminate the pain for some people out there. But for most of us, that pain is very real. It is insulting to be told that grieving is some sort of manifestation of ego-stroking and pathetic wallowing in self-pity or that it is a fake societal construct that allows us to congratulate ourselves in public for being humane and compassionate.

Jenny's death prodded me to reflect on and reexamine my perspectives on the fleeting quality of life and relationships between myself and other people. The fact that she was my age is very prominent on my mind. No one could say with a straight face that she led a wasteful or unproductive life. I don't need to go into a litany of her achievements in a typical over-exaggerated eulogy but suffice it to say that she was extremely motivated and dedicated to exacting change in this world. She sacrificed her personal life, and eventually her physical life, to work for causes she very deeply believed in, almost obsessively so. I started to look at my own life. Have I accomplished anything worthwhile? Can I look in the past or present and honestly say that I have had any kind of impact on this world or any one person in it? Can I wake up in the morning every day and say that yesterday wasn't a waste

of time? I am 25 now—have my 25 years been even remotely fulfilling? Has my life been rich and rewarding not only myself but to others?

Maintaining friendships and relationships is particularly difficult for me these days. Not only do I almost completely isolate myself from others and am constantly away from home, but I am also beginning to realize that friendship and mutual understanding mean completely different things to different people. I have always tried to be open, honest, and communicative with friends and lovers. I really try to think before I speak, give people the benefit of the doubt, and keep channels of communication open and two-way. The last thing Jonathon, Jenny's boyfriend, heard from her was quite ugly and he is going to have to live with that forever. I don't want to ever say something that would make someone suffer like that.

That's not exactly equivalent to stamping "doormat" on my forehead—I just mean that I am trying to make special efforts to be rational and adult and not let my temper or ego rule the day. Unfortunately, I think my intentions are still often overlooked and misunderstood but do I really need to have the last word? Do I really need to force someone to understand me or obsessively press myself to understand others? There is a time to just let go.

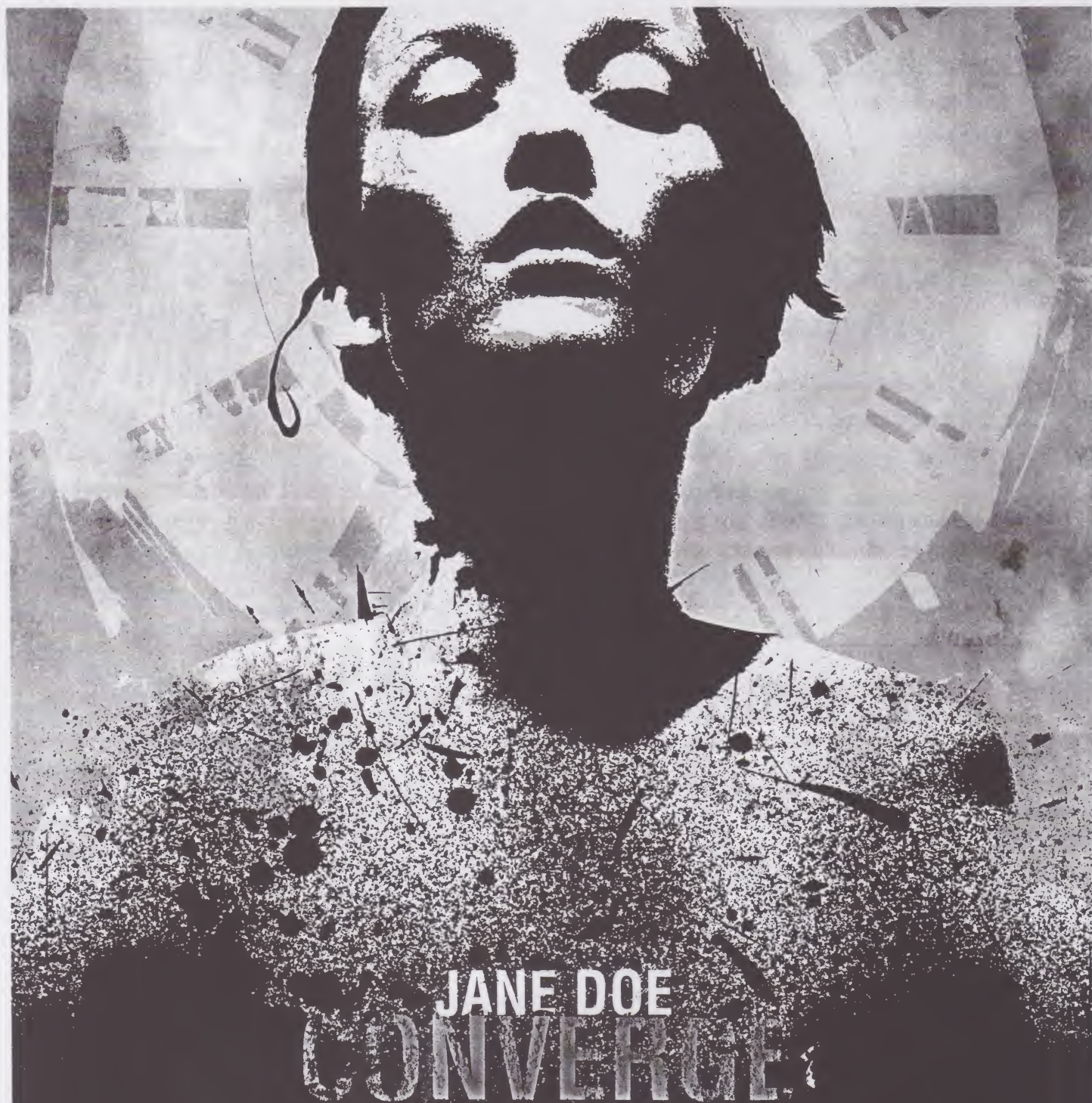
I wish, fruitlessly, that I could have at least said one thing to Jenny before she died. I wish, pointlessly, that I had kept in touch with her after she left for Malawi. Since I couldn't and didn't, respectively, I just want to say here simply that I will not forget her.

• • •

Soundtrack to this column:

Buzzcocks—*Singles Going Steady*; Calvary—7 song demo; Lama—everything; La Polla Records—¿*Y Ahora Qué?*; Bach Cello Suite no. 1; Tragedy LP; Bastard discography. ©

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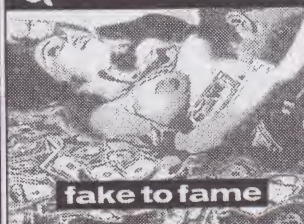
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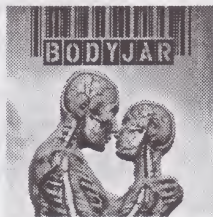
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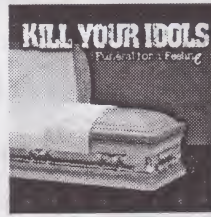
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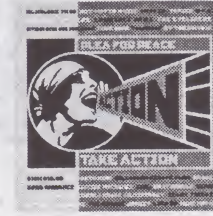
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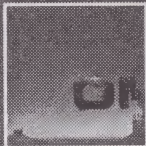
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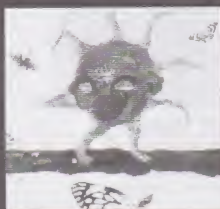
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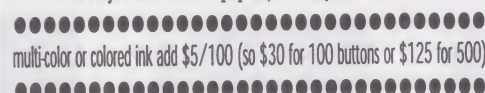
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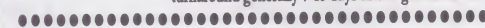
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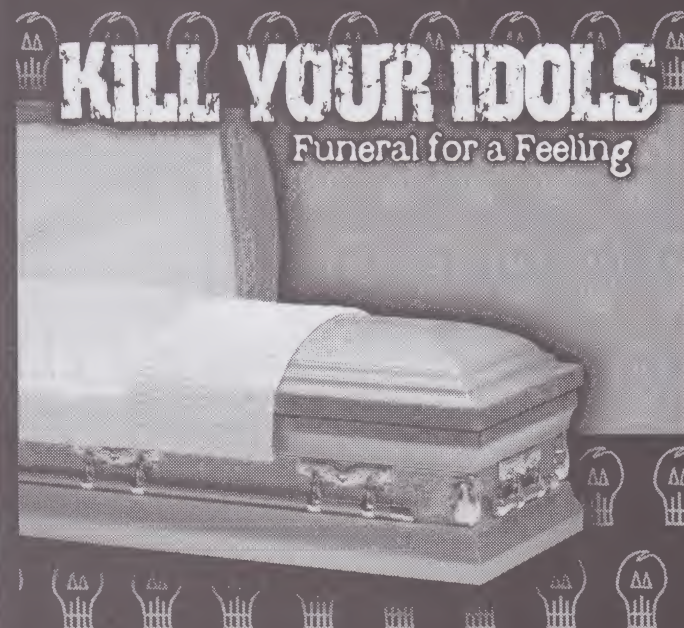


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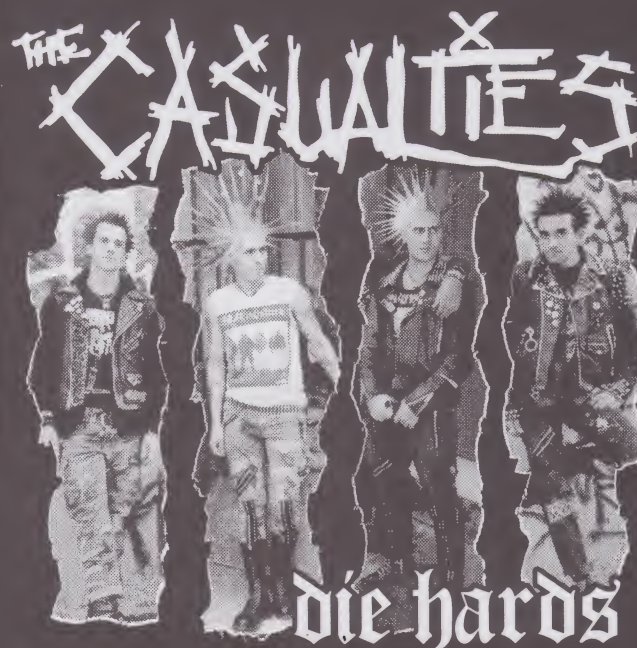
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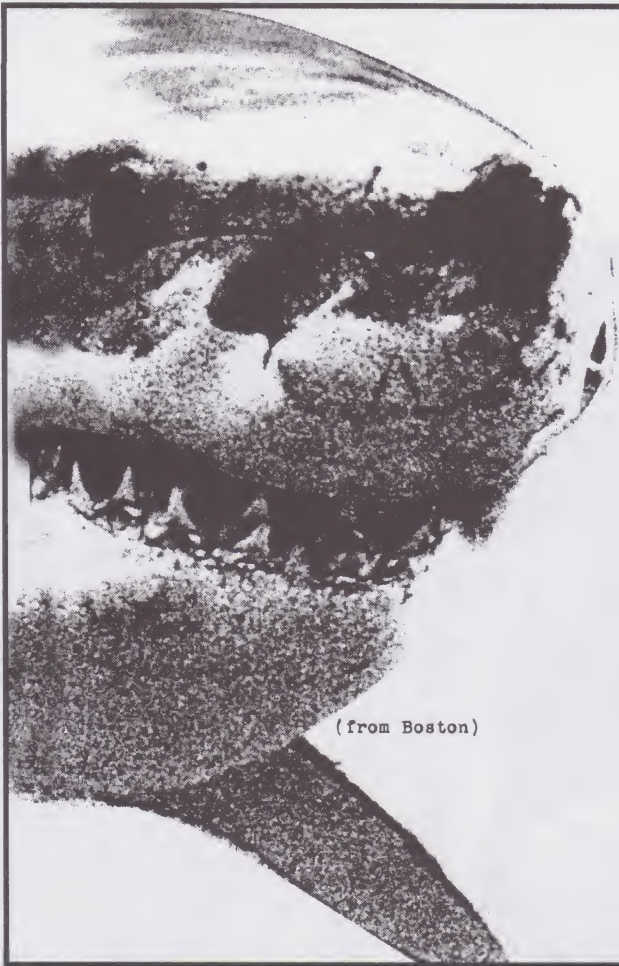
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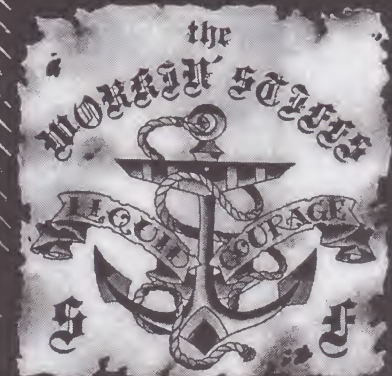


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Almost everything that Shellac is can be summed up in their Amplifiers. "We made a conscious decision that we wanted to have cool looking amplifiers," guitarist and vocalist Steve Albini explains. "They were absurdly expensive if you add everything up, but to us it was worth it because we have these cool looking amplifiers we can carry around."

That's it: an uncompromising commitment to an aesthetic vision achieved at any cost. What more do you need? We are talking about a band that tosses a CD in for free when you buy their newest LP, *1000 Hurts*, because LPs sound better. Or a band that held up their second album, *Terraform* for two years because they weren't happy with the print job of the album sleeve. It's the same band that holds shows at 10:00 in the morning on New Years Day, because they thought it'd be fun. Oh yeah, they're also the band that has really cool amplifiers—they look like they were lifted right out of a '50s sci-fi flick. Shellac's attention to detail is what makes Shellac, well, Shellac.

But oddly, the band often isn't known for being Shellac—they're known for being the band that iconoclastic recording engineer Steve Albini is in. "It is a little absurd where you see a review of an album and they talk about 'Steve's drum part' or 'Steve's bass line,'" explains Bob Weston, who plays bass for the band. To some degree it's understandable: Albini is one of the most outspoken figures in the underground today. But at the same time, Shellac has been around for almost 10 years now and has certainly proven to be a unique force in the underground. You'd think that after a decade, some folks would get it. It's really not all that hard to figure out: Shellac doesn't sound like Albini—Albini sounds like Shellac.

The band's sound is so singular as to be instantly recognizable. The rumble of Weston's basslines; the angular, syncopated thumps of Todd Trainer's drums; and of course, the buzz-saw sound of Albini's guitar and vocals. Give a Shellac song two seconds and you know what it is. Give a Shellac song two minutes and you leave the room bleeding.

Oh yeah, did I mention they're brutal? They are. It's the kind of brutality that you wouldn't expect from a band that serves breakfast treats at early-morning concerts, hires Christians to work security at their shows here in Chicago, or has arguments about who should wear the bunny suit on stage. But the instant that Albini's guitar meets Weston's bass and Trainer's drums, all the nice-nice is tossed out the window and the band becomes an entirely different animal.

"To the one true god above, here is my prayer" Albini starts the opening song on *1000 Hurts*. The song, a prayer for biblical vengeance on a cheating lover doesn't take long to get to the point: "just fucking KILL HIM." In case you didn't hear him, Albini repeats the line a couple dozen times, his voice cracking as he shouts. It's a classic Shellac moment: clear, honest, and unapologetic.

The band doesn't apologize for anything it does. From day one, they made no promises. The first track on their first album, *From Action Park*, says it all: "You're gonna eat what I fix—and I hope you choke on it."

I had a chance to sit down with Trainer, Weston, and Albini before one of their rare band practices at Albini's Electrical Audio studio in Chicago.

Interview by **Daniel Sinker**
Photos by **Heather Whinna**

You guys have a practice tonight. How often do you practice?

Todd: We never actually rehearse old songs or practice in that sense of the word, do we?

Steve: If we haven't seen each other in a few months and we have a show coming up, we'll try to get together right before the show and run through the songs that we remember giving us trouble the last time we played. In a good year, I'd say we get to play together—not counting time on stage—eight or 10 times. Ten times is like a *really* good year.

Bob: The frequency is really random too, they could all be bunched up in a month and then not again for four months. It's just kind of random.

With playing so infrequently, in fits and spurts, is there ever a time you forget you're in the band?

Bob: We all think about it and talk about it a lot. We see each other and talk to each other on the phone all the time.

Steve: I can't speak for Bob and Todd, but I know that pretty much *all day every day*, there's some facet of the band's behavior or music rolling over in the back of my head.

Todd: The band doesn't have to be in the act of creation, or even all three of us in the same room for me to feel like I'm part of it.

Bob: Or for us to be working on it on our own.

Steve: I've been in this band for twice as long as I've been in any other band. The band, for me at least, isn't just shows, records, songs, rehearsals, and performing. There are a whole lot of other things that I think of as being tied in with the band. Just this morning I got some correspondence about some upcoming shows that we're going to go do in Italy. It's an extension of this conceptual thread in the band where we try to tour places that we've never been and are curious about, or places where we know we're going to enjoy ourselves. We've been to Italy before and the particular guy we deal with in Italy is this guy Agostino from the amazing band Uzeda. He's such a sweetheart and he's such a great guy that just getting to hang out with him is an ambi-

tion. Whenever we think about what we want to do in the band, one of the things is see if we can't go to Italy and hang out with Agostino and drink really good coffee. I find that stuff as engaging and fun as writing a song or whatever.

How have you seen your approach to being in a band change over the years?

Bob: It's weird, because I think it's really similar in some ways. When we were first in bands, we were either in school or had jobs and you would do your band in your free time. Now, we all have jobs and we do the band in our free time. It's just that we don't use as much of our free time for the band as we did a long time ago.

doing it for the experience of it. ¶ I think the three of us have an appreciation of music that goes beyond the experience of it. We have an appreciation for the interaction and the complex nature of being in a band and sustaining that intellectually and emotionally.

Todd: To break it down in the most basic sense, I really treat the band *just* like I did 20 years ago when I started playing in



“People choose their heroes. You can't set out to be a hero for somebody. You can't decide, ‘Well, I'm going to live an exemplary life for the purpose of enlightening others.’ That's the *wrong* reason to lead an exemplary life.” —Albini

Steve: There's this “teenager mentality” about a lot of things—you get really excited about something and you totally exhaust it in the course of a year. A lot of people treat bands like that. They want to be in a band and tour around and play shows and get some stupid insignia tattooed on their shoulder. And once they've gotten those things out of their system, it's almost like a solved problem in their lives—“Oh, I did that, now I can move on.” ¶ The result of all this sort of temporary dabbling in music is that you get two kinds of things: you get this totally manic, explosive, intense periods of activity in some people and some bands where there's a million ideas spraying out all at once and a million moments of intense theater. The other thing is you get a shit-million half-assed records and shows and bands that are just done as a place keeper for that period of people's lives. Those seem to be the way that that mentality plays out: either an intense burst of activity or people that probably shouldn't have bothered, just

bands. It's all been kicks. It really hasn't changed. I don't feel any different about it now than I did then.

Bob: The only difference is that we don't practice five days a week.

Todd: Because we're all excellent. [laughs] We don't need to.

Do you feel like you're still learning things?

Bob: Oh yeah.

Steve: I feel like I'm still struggling with the same limitations I had at the beginning, so I'm still trying to overcome my initial weaknesses.

Bob: And practicing every three months doesn't help any of us get any better very quickly. [laughs]

Steve: A lot of people use a band as an excuse to indulge in childish behavior. They think you're in a band, you can be this loose cannon and do all these crazy things. In a way, that's denying maturity, denying adulthood, and denying the responsibilities and

the day-to-day obligations that people assume as they become adults. None of us have denied ourselves adulthood. We've had jobs and families and love affairs and all that stuff. We've allowed ourselves to become adults as well as continue to be involved in music. But that implies that you're not going to exert *all* of your energy on the band, because you have this complete life to live as well. I think that's one of the keys to the longevity of Shellac.



“We're in control of everything that has to do with the band. We make *all* of the decisions. We control what the album jackets look like; we control who will put on shows for us. We decide where we're going to tour and how we're going to organize the tour. We decide what our T-shirts are going to look like and how much we're going to charge for them.” —Weston

Bob: We're not 35-year-olds pretending to be 18-year-olds.

Steve: That's it, that's nice. There's this thing where people associate all this external stuff with being involved in music, like you're going to have a chaotic life, you're going to keep crazy hours . . .

Bob: . . . have a shit job . . .

Steve: . . . have things to complain about in your life. Sure, we have things in our lives that cause tension and stuff, but I don't have anything to complain about. I feel like I've had a pretty good run, I feel like life has treated *me* pretty well.

Did any of you find the transition from teenage band-ness to adult band-ness difficult? I know for me, I can find a very certain point in doing the magazine where I really had to negotiate my own space and my own time where I could be separate from the magazine. Whereas when you're a kid, you kind of . . .

Bob: . . . live it?

Exactly. There comes a time where you want a life that can be separate from all these other things. It certainly seems like you all have been able to do that. Was there ever a period of time where you thought, “Shit, I need to be an adult, and being an adult means not doing this, or doing this in a very different way?”

Bob: I don't know. When I came out here and started playing with you guys, did we talk about how the band was going to operate?

Steve: All of those obstacles were already in existence in our lives at that point. On a personal level, after Rapeman broke up, I

made a decision that I wasn't going to be in a band for a period. And the reason I did it—it's a very personal thing that I don't expect anyone else to have any sympathy for—was that I wanted to avoid the kind of “careerist” mentality that a lot of musicians get. They get comfortable being in a band—they know how to do it, they know what's expected of them, and so they just continue doing it because it's the path of least resistance. I wanted to thwart that impulse in myself, and make sure that if I was going to get involved in another band—if I was going to do anything else that I was going to hang my hat on—that it was for the right reasons. I don't think it was associated with that break between childhood and adulthood, but there was a fork in the

road and either I could continue being in bands because I was comfortable and familiar with it and I knew how to do it, or I could force myself to wait and bide my time and see if another band developed organically. And that's what happened when Todd and I started playing together. We started as sort of a goof-off, but we got on so well and we seemed to enjoy it, that it gradually became a band.

Todd: I've been in bands—sometimes two bands at once—for 20 years. It's been a very natural progression to me to continue playing music. I feel pretty fortunate at this point in time. If you had asked me 20 years ago if I would have expected to be in a *good* band at this point in my life, I don't know. Looking back, I feel really fortunate to be in a decent rock band at this point in my life. But, there was never a point in time where I said, “I have to give up my life for this now.” I never did that.

What about your moving to Chicago, Todd? Does that symbolize something larger than just a change of scenery?

Todd: I've actually been employed for the last 25 years of my life. Literally *all* through junior high school and high school from the minute I left, I had a full time job. It ran a parallel existence with either one or two or sometimes the three bands I was in all at once. I lost my job in January and I was unemployed for the first time. I thought it would be really excellent to come here and act like a 20 year old for the first time [laughs]—act like I was in a band with no other responsibilities. It wasn't a conscious decision—I didn't quit my job to come here, I *lost* my job. Looking at my options, this seemed really ideal. ¶ But my life is up in the air for the first time ever. I *do* have to consider adulthood, but I'm not going to quit the band to pursue some kind of career. I think whatever it is you choose to do, if it's outside of the fringe of a 40-hour a week job, you forfeit any opportunity to have a realistic career. I didn't go to college, and at this point in my life it's probably too late to go to college and pursue a career and make it worthwhile financially. You do that when you're 20. ¶ I couldn't have had a full-time job, three bands, and a

college occupation—all of those things wouldn't have worked. I opted to rock as opposed to pursue a career. I'm in the process of paying for that right now, but I'm in a luxurious and fortunate time in my life. For the first time *ever* I'm not working and in two bands. I love it. It's the best time of my life. ¶ Bob and Steve mentioned that we don't have much time to pursue our instruments individually, and I actually am excited about having time in my life to pursue drums again like I did when I was a kid. Back then I could play drums pretty much whenever I wanted. I wasn't in a band and so when I sat down to play drums, I played to get *better*. I haven't done that for 25 years, but I'm interested in having the time to pursue it and improve upon drumming.

To hear you all talk about the band, it really sounds like you could be in this band *forever*. Do you guys feel that way? Do you feel like you could be 65 and in Shellac?

Bob: No one wants to see an old guy rocking on stage though—the Rolling Stones look pathetic.

Steve: But Agostino is 46 and is a fucking cannonball on stage! Tom Verlaine is pushing 50 . . .

Bob: That's true, that's true. OK, I take it back.

Steve: If you see Cheap Trick on a good night—which is just about *any* night—you realize that all of the associations that people make between rock music and youth are not, of themselves, valid. It's not about *youth*. Every now and again, some young kid discovers punk rock and thinks that it's the exclusive province of teenagers and gets all testy about anyone that's been doing it for longer than him. I have very little patience for that because I've had my mind *blown* by 50 year olds. ¶ But in the same way that our external lives have become more complicated in the last 20 years, they might very well become more complicated yet in the *next* 20 years. That might mean that the band becomes *very* marginal, as opposed to *merely* marginal. [laughs]

Bob: Or, there might be an eight-year period where we didn't do anything. But then when we do something, it wouldn't be

a reunion, it would just be the next record.

Todd: I would be really sad if the band were to end any time soon. Like with anything that you really love, you think very little about it ending. Who wants to think about their pet dying? You just don't. If you're in love, you don't want to think about the possibility of *not* being in love. The band is that same way for me.

Occasionally it crosses my mind and it makes me really sad to think that at any instant this band could be over. That's true for *any* band or *any* thing or *any* one. I try to think as little as possible about the end of the band. ¶ I do believe that we've all seen bands in their mid-40s or 50s that are *amazing*. Musicians don't necessarily get worse, in some cases they get better.

I want to shift gears a little bit and talk about the way the band manifests itself other than music. Shellac to me is a unique band in that it seems that as much care is put into the things that surround the band as what's put down on tape. The band that I can think of off the top of my head that equals that is Fugazi, in their care for the entire package, versus just the creative, musical end of it. We've been talking a lot about the music, but how important is everything else besides the music to all of you?

Steve: The band is the embodiment of *all* of the ideas that occur within the band. The music contains *some* of those ideas, but not all of them. Everything we do as a band and everything that goes through our minds regarding the band has equal weight for all of us. To me, that's an acknowledgement of what is true in any band; it's just that some bands make a distinction between those things that they will compromise or give up on, and those things that they won't. We're in a position where we don't have to give up on *any* of those ideas. We don't rely on the band for our income, so it doesn't matter if a particular decision is profitable or not. We don't exist for the sake of acclaim, so it doesn't matter if what we do is popular or unpopular. We don't have any obligations to do anything according to any schedule, so if—as was the case with our last album—we record an album and three months later we think we'd like to do more work on it

because we've decided we weren't content with it, nobody's going to take offense to that. There's nothing about what we do that we have to give up on—we don't have to say *uncle, ever*. It took almost *two* years to get the friggin' jackets printed for our second album. A band in the conventional sense has a release date that they have to meet because there is a touring schedule associated with it and a record company that has their promotional gears all worked up. If those things existed for us, we would have had to have put up with a shitty looking record for no reason other than that the bell rang and time ran out. But we're not in that position.

Bob: We're in control of everything that has to do with the band. We make *all* of the decisions. We control what the album jackets look like; we control who will put on shows for us. We decide where we're going to tour and how we're going to organize the tour. We decide what our T-shirts are going to look like and how much we're going to charge for them.

Is it important that you not only do these things in the way that you want to do them, but you do them in a manner that demonstrates to other bands that they could do them as well?

Steve: In that Fugazi video, Brendan's sister ran into a guy who said he had heard that Fugazi all lived in a house together with no heat and just ate rice. [laughs] These sort of mythological things . . . people *choose* their heroes. You can't set out to be a hero for somebody. You can't decide, "Well, I'm going to live an exemplary life for the purpose of enlightening others." That's the *wrong* reason to lead an exemplary life. You should lead an exemplary life because it gives you satisfaction.

Bob: And because it's the right thing to do.

Steve: Yeah. I think that everything that we do, ultimately, is kind of selfish.

Bob: We're doing it for us, not to set an example.

Todd: I don't consider us an example at all. Any band that exists can be used as an example. We all come from a background where you were forced to do things your

own way. I hate to say DIY, but you *did* and it wasn't that big of a deal. All of us have become very comfortable with that. ¶ From my perspective—and this is being really general—I see a lot of younger bands' goals focused on getting signed. They believe that's going to help with promotion, publicity, and distribution and becoming popular and touring. All those networks *are* set up, but no matter who you get involved with, if you get involved with a booking agent, or a manager, or a label, the more people that involve themselves in your band, the less of a singular identity it has for itself and the less focused it becomes. Any band can be an example, it's just that there are a lot of *bad* examples.

Steve: Part of it is the long view. We've all been playing in bands for a long time and we've seen a lot of things. Trends and modes of behavior develop and dissipate. We were all in bands during a period when there was *no* such entity as a booking agent. Sure, there were booking agents, but they were for getting bands for weddings—they didn't have *anything* to do with rock bands. For bands that are coming up now and entering this milieu, what they see as normal behavior is to get other people to do things for you. To us, that seems inefficient, wasteful, and in a way almost denying one of the principle joys of being in a band. ¶ I think the *classic* example of the absurdity of that mentality is the "punk rock publicist." That such a thing exists is an insult and a horrible—horrible—scar on what I see as a very rich community of independent thinking people. Fanzines exist because people want to write about bands that they love. The notion that someone can insinuate herself into that network and say "you're going to write about *this* band and the reason you're going to write about this band is because I want you to and the reason I want you to is because they're *paying* me to want you to." It's made this *cartoon* of the mainstream music business on a small scale. It *sickens* me. I have big enough problems with booking agents, I have a bigger problem with managers, but I think these parasitic, secondary figures are *by far* the most offensive development. It's as though from their perspec-

tive the only thing wrong with the regular music business is that it wasn't done by amateurs. [laughs]

It's as if everything we dislike about that world has been replicated on a model railroad scale.

Steve: Yeah, in sort of an inept and self-satisfied fashion.

I have to field so many phone calls from publicists that I had to get caller ID! If I were to answer the phone every time I got a call to "follow up" on a record for a band that has released a single 7", or their first album, I would never get the magazine out. It drives me crazy beyond belief. Now, taking your feelings on this into account, you guys have gone about—especially locally—putting together your own shows in alternative venues, or booking tours in alternative venues and things like that. How important is that level of work? It seems like a continual extension of the band. You move the concept further and further away from the music.

Steve: To me, it's all part of being in a band.

Bob: It's how we present ourselves, whether it's on a record or in a magazine or on stage.

Steve: It's how we've always done it. The bands that we were in 20 years ago did it the same way. The more I'm presented with options of other ways to do things, the more I'm convinced that the way we've always done it is the best for us. That way of doing things has proved its worth. The efficiency alone makes a big difference. If you've got other people working for you, or you're working through conventional, exploitative markets, you end up taxing your audience to pay for those people or that mode of behavior. ¶ I can use the Fugazi shows as an example because they're fresh in my memory: those shows were in a beautiful theater, had a nice, professional sound system, accommodated 3,500 people a night, and tickets were *six dollars*. All of the things that you want to have happen at a show happened: it was a sellout show, the security staff were reasonable, intelligent human beings, everyone was treated decently, everyone was comfortable, a good lineup of bands played, and it was *six fucking dollars*! You can go to any bar in Chicago and watch a local aspiring band play for

eight to 12 to 18 dollars and be treated worse, get less-comfortable surroundings, and at the end of the day, where does all that money go? It goes to all the things you don't like! It goes to pay for the annoying security guy, it goes to pay for the weasel who is siphoning money off of the band's income, it goes to pay for the extraneous and unnecessary promotion. It goes to pay for all the things that you as a patron would *gladly* do without! If you just don't do those things, you don't have to pay for them and everything operates at a much greater level of efficiency.

One thing that interests me—*fascinates* me—about your band, as opposed to a band like Fugazi is that Fugazi, to me at least, seems very consistent in action, in creation, and in message artistically. This is obviously me being an outsider looking in at you guys, but I see this strange dichotomy between action, creation and what's actually being said. A friend of mine this morning described the overarching theme of your music as being about "men and the evil that they do."

Steve: It sounds like you're describing Quentin Tarentino! [Laughs]

It's hard for me to articulate this . . .

Steve: Why are all our songs not about being nice to each other, is that what you mean?

I think that's an oversimplification. It seems that somebody could pick up a Shellac record, listen to it and walk away with no grip on all of this other stuff that's important to you guys as a band.

Todd: It's not important to us to be recognized as nice guys—or *not* nice guys. I really don't think it is. It's not important for us to be recognized as the people that set up their own gear. It's not necessary that people know we booked our own tours. It is part of the band and that's great, but . . .

Steve: . . . that's for us.

Todd: If people are enjoying our music, it doesn't have to go beyond that.

Bob: We don't have a publicist telling people about the way we behave. [laughs]

Steve: Do you think these sort of conclusions that people draw are *ever* true?

Do you think that Steven King is an evil, hateful, Satanic sort of person? Do you think that Agatha Christie was really into killing people? The subject matter of a piece of art doesn't tell you anything about the person that did it other than for the moment, he was interested in exploring that subject matter. I think it's an overly simplistic, almost nursery-school notion that songs have to have a specific ethical or moral lesson in play. That to me seems like it would be almost an insult to an audience. To expect an audience to be lectured by you, to be taught by you, to be told what is right and what is wrong . . . I would like to give a listener the credit of being as intelligent as any one of us. We live our lives according to our own personal moral codes and I wouldn't presume to spell that out for an audience member for the same reason I wouldn't presume to justify any aspect of my life to anybody else. That's for me. I conduct myself in a way that I'm comfortable. ¶ The subject matter of our songs, or whatever, that's a thing unto itself. That's something that we happen to be interested in at the moment. I also think that if someone expects some sort of consistency within the thematic content of the music of an artist, either you have to have a very simplistic artist, like an artist who's so plainspoken and single-minded in his thoughts that you can make those deductions, or you're going to be grossly off base. I defy anybody to tell me what any of the Bad Brains songs are about—and they're great. I would defy anybody to tell me what any of Black Sabbath's songs are about—with the possible exception of "Iron Man," which I think is fairly straightforward. [laughs]

Bob: I think that a lot of our band's songs are absurd. I tend to think that our band is pretty funny.

I agree. That's what I think is really interesting to me is this interplay between that. We're rarely, in punk, "allowed" to be funny. Punk seems to take itself very seriously.

Todd: We're not punk, we're hard rock.

Steve: If that's what you're saying punk is, I'm not interested then. I remember when punk rock happened, don't get me

wrong. Punk rock was great; it was really fucking cool. It was a blinding flash; it was totally liberating and inspirational. When I think of punk rock, that's what I think of. I think of that chaotic, crazy couple of years where every record was totally different and totally insane. If what you're describing as punk rock, that sort of bookish mentality, then I think punk rock will be fine without us [laughs]. ¶ I think that as a listener you have a choice of what you want to listen to and what you want to expose yourself to. You can expose yourself to stuff that is interesting on its own accord, or you expose yourself to stuff that just continuously reaffirms your worldview. I think that to only listen to the latter is to deprive yourself of the great mental exercise that you get from trying to figure out what it is that you're reading or listening to or looking at. ¶ A really good example is Will Oldham: some of the stuff that he writes—the literal words—are utter nonsense. But getting to the point where it dawns on you that it's utter nonsense is a really great ride. There's a woman named Shannon Wright whose records, I think, are phenomenal. I haven't the slightest fucking idea what she's saying in any of them. I think it's English in the sense that the words are English words, but what her message is?

"It's not important to us to be recognized as nice guys—or not nice guys. I really don't think it is. It's not important for us to be recognized as the people that set up their own gear. It's not necessary that people know we booked our own tours." —Trainer

Who the fuck knows. But that doesn't soften the impact of her music to me at all. In fact, it doesn't even enter into it.

That concept reflects a certain level of maturity that a teenager isn't as apt to comprehend. It's a level of involvement that quite often a young person doesn't have. Is that concept something that you all have held all along, or is it something that has come with age and getting older and being in a band longer and longer and all of a sudden there

are new challenges and those new challenges could be more in the abstract?

Bob: I don't think we think about how we go about writing songs, or what we're writing songs about—we just write songs. It takes someone like you to come along and discuss it with us and we go, "Oh yeah, I guess this is what happened, or this is why that's happening." We just write songs. I don't think we think about how or why we write songs.

In thinking about what I wanted to cover in this interview, I remembered Sunday night at the Fugazi show. Somebody tossed something up on stage to Bob, but it was addressed to Steve and then Todd came up from behind the drum set and said "I'm in Steve's Band!" I had also spoken with Bob during the Saturday night show and he said that it was an odd experience to play a show and have 3,000 people looking to your left—at Steve. Do you guys get frustrated by that?

Steve: I get frustrated by it sometimes.



Bob: We're in the band. We know that it's a band, not Steve and the backup guys.

Todd: Obviously, saying "I'm in Steve's band" was a joke in hopes of amusing and entertaining the people. But no, it is perceived as Steve's band and that to me is really frustrating, because it's a band.

Bob: It is a little absurd where you see a review of an album and they talk about "Steve's drum part" or "Steve's bass line."

Todd: Sometimes it is very obvious when there is a band leader or a singer/songwriter and musicians involved. I understand the initial "Steve's band" approach, I do, but it's been almost 10 years. I think it's narrow-minded and a bit insulting to consider it Steve's band. But I don't really care what people think. I don't care if they like our band or if they don't. If they want to think of it as Steve's band, that's fine. Sometimes it is a little frustrating though.

Bob: Because we all put in the same amount.

ly happy to be in Bob's band too! [laughs]

Bob: I think people who are fans of the band or are even a little bit familiar with the band understand how it works. I just think it's people who are less familiar with the band or have only heard of Steve think of it that way.

Todd: It's understandable because Steve is by far the most famous figure in the band. I have no problem with that whatsoever, I respect and admire Steve.

Bob: There's a flip side to the whole "Steve" thing, too. The fact that Steve's in this band, especially at the beginning, meant that more people wanted to see us or buy our records because it was Steve's band.

"I think it's an overly simplistic, almost nursery-school notion that songs have to have a specific ethical or moral lesson in play. That to me seems like it would be almost an insult to an audience." —Albini

Todd: I think it's a shame when critics—people that have *made a living* writing about these things—call it Steve's band. It's really frustrating to me that some guy can make a living—which none of us have managed to do in this band—and be so narrow-minded and misinformed. Mind you, these are all the same cocksuckers giving us two out of 10s, or eights, or a fucking A- or an F. I have no problem saying they're all a bunch of clowns. If someone is so knowledgeable that they can foresee how great records are, then they should be millionaires, not rock critics. They are paid, so therefore they ought to know a little bit. When *those* are the people that are constantly saying "Albini's band" this or that, that frustrates me. I feel like, can't we get on with it? Can't we move on to the next level, which is we're just another band?

Steve: If someone was writing about, say, a dog show and that was the only thing

that you did professionally was to write about dog shows, but you couldn't get any of the specifics about dogs in general, this particular dog show, or even the *notion* of a dog show correct, you wouldn't last as a dog show writer. But for some reason, professional music journalism is exempt from any of these conduct standards.

Music seems so important to all of you. What if you couldn't have ever gotten into music. Obviously this is a hypothetical, but let's just say that music didn't exist as a possibility for creative expression. What would you do?

Bob: Well, I really like taking photos. I already do that, but I guess I'd do photography. It's one of my hobbies, so I guess I'd do it more.

Todd: I honestly can't imagine. I really am pretty narrow-minded when it comes to my creative outlet. I have a minor fascination with painting, but it pales in comparison to my love for music.

Bob: His paintings are actually quite good!

Todd: I just really, really love music. I'm glad that it exists.

Steve: That's a really weird question for me, because I can't even *conceive* of a world where I was only allowed to do one thing. I suppose if anything else interested me, I'd be doing it already. I don't think that I would be content if I wasn't in Shellac. So what would I do to make myself content other than being in Shellac? I would say that I would probably be in Shellac.

One last question: Who do you think would win in a fight between a man with a big metal wrench and a man with a rusty saw?

Steve: It depends on how big of a wrench. I've seen some really big wrenches. I've seen wrenches it takes four people to move. If the guy had a wrench that big, I think it would be a disadvantage.

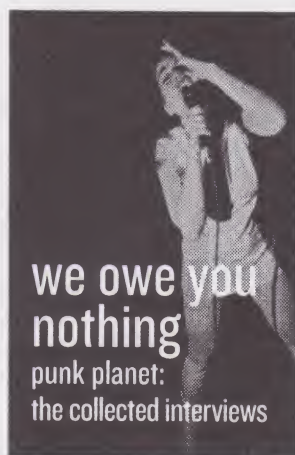
Bob: I think the wrench would win. It seems with a rusty saw, it would take a lot more time to inflict any sort of damage on your opponent.

Todd: Like any real war, whoever's got the sharpest tongue wins. ☺

Todd: It's frustrating not to be recognized as a member of this really excellent band, instead you're a hired hand. We've actually been referred to as hired hands and that to me is really insulting and frustrating. I'm not losing any sleep over it, though. I'm really happy to be in Steve's band! I'm real-

the underground speaks for itself:

Black Flag
Kathleen Hanna
Noam Chomsky
Sleater-Kinney
Thurston Moore
Jello Biafra
Frank Kozik
Ian MacKaye
Steve Albini
Ruckus Society
Winston Smith
Porcell
Jody Bleyle
Mordam Records
Los Crudos
Negativland
Matt Wobensmith
Chumbawamba
Central Ohio Abortion
Access Fund
Art Chantry
Ted Leo
Jem Cohen
Voices in the
Wilderness
Duncan Barlow
Jon Strange



WE OWE YOU NOTHING

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I first met Chad Clark when I set up some benefit shows in Washington, DC with his former band Smart Went Crazy. I was intrigued by the tempestuous, cynical entity that was his former band. To me, Smart Went Crazy were one of the most daring groups to grace the District of Columbia. Unfortunately, the band broke up just when things were really getting interesting, leaving fans like myself hungry for more.

Many are eagerly following and anticipating the music Clark has been working on in his free time with the new band Beauty Pill. The new band, which grew organically from the devastation left behind from the breakup of Smart Went Crazy features Joanne Gholle on bass/vocals, Abram Goodrich on recorded drums, sounds, and guitar, Ryan Nelson on live drums, and Chad Clark on guitar/vocals.

Interview by **Katy Otto**

How did Beauty Pill come about?

Chad Clark: Basically, we started about six months to a year after Smart Went Crazy broke up. It was an idea that was between me and Abram, that we would focus on the things we loved about making music, which were writing songs and putting ideas together. Not so much on playing shows or being a "real" band, just the creative aspect of it. There was no pressure or deadline to it, we could just live in our own world. For me that was a healing process after the end of our last band. I could remember what I loved about music again—why I was doing it and why it was worth carrying on. ¶ Then we added Joanne, largely because after the last band, I was able to think about how I want-

ed to put a band together. The way I wanted to do it was based on friendship and on people whose company I enjoyed. I wanted to make music out of that as opposed to focusing on the musicianship first and then the personality second. We decided to make an adventure of it. We bought the gear to do it and we recorded it on our own time. We got lost for a while, but we enjoyed it. ¶ Then we got Ryan.

Ryan Nelson: Chad wrote me an e-mail and said, "Hey, I've got a proposition for you . . ." He invited me to join the band. This was after Chad had recorded *Most Secret Method* stuff and Chad was feeling the vibe that he could get along with me. I met the other bandmates and we talked about how we all feel about music and they talked about what they wanted to do with the band. It was very open-ended and intriguing. I heard the stuff that they had done in the studio already and I was all over it. I wanted to be a part of it.

It seems as if throughout the whole process you've looked at playing music as a very spiritual act—as almost communion. How does that affect the art itself, putting so much attention into the relationship?

Chad: I want to do something good. That seems like a worthwhile pursuit: to try to actually be good.

Joanne Golle: I never cared to play with people who aren't my friends. I come from the punk tradition—I never wanted to be a virtuoso guitar player, I wanted to play with people I liked.

Chad: That's sort of what I was trying to get at. My interest in playing with people I love is both object and goal oriented. The way to come to something great is to start with love.

Joanne: It's also a good thing to look forward to being around the people you like. You have to be around them a lot to not like them!

It's interesting that you talk about "love" in the context of making music. It seems to me that music can have masculine and feminine qualities. I'm not talking about the gender makeup of the band itself, but instead the actual music.

Abram Goodrich: I think part of the motivation to start the band came out of a lot of what we learned to dislike in *Smart Went Crazy* and seeing other bands across the country who were very muscular, brutal, and over the top—it's really macho. Indie-punk music that has the word "emo" slapped onto it, it has a pretty narrow range of emotion that it expresses. If you want to talk about being more feminine, that is something we wanted to do with this band—to be more open to being beautiful.

Chad: It's also a different model of aggression, one that has cunning, intelligence, and subversion as opposed to a big fist. Slyness is also a big thing . . . It is always dangerous when you talk about this, because I am catching myself saying slyness is a trait I ascribe to women rather than men, but that is a sexist idea, that women are untrustworthy and not confrontational.

Ryan: So many men are!

Joanne: When you talk about cunning, I do cringe a little. Although that might be a good way to describe it. We want to, just . . .

Chad: We don't want to be afraid to be blunt.

Joanne: We wanted to do something more elegant and eloquent.

Ryan: I think it is evident in the music: both come out—masculine and feminine. It's a good mix.

Chad: Detail is another trait that I don't think is encouraged in males. I'm always interested in being provocative. I'm not interested in things being easy. I am interested in flooding the music with detail. That seems like a feminine value.

How do songs come about in the band?

Chad: We're trying to figure out our own language. That is the whole excitement of it—you are trying to define what falls within that world and outside of that world.

Abram: And to figure out if you can mesh the ideas with your abilities.

Ryan: I try and let go. Abram has a ton of ideas and great suggestions; he is constantly hearing how things should be. Rather than challenge it, I try to take it in.

Everyone has to do that with each other though. There isn't a whole lot of protesting—just trying it out.

How does that process translate to recording?

Abram: There was definitely a point in our history where things switched from phase one to phase two. We spent a lot of time in phase two, which was the recording phase. It was really educational. Chad was engineering his first record, and we bought all this equipment to record ourselves. We had to spend time with the equipment and, in addition to the creative decisions, we had to make technical ones. Where are we going to record? How are we going to come up with microphones? There were other things, like the fact that we had to finish writing all our songs or that I had to learn to play a whole new instrument.

Chad: That is another important thing to note: At the beginning of this project, Abram just took it upon himself to teach himself drums. I would never take it upon myself to learn a completely alien instrument, although I guess Abram was always the rhythmic theorist behind *Smart Went Crazy*. It was the first time he was the drummer and the first time I was the engineer—that is part of what took so long. We spent a long time indulging our curiosities about what we could sound like. I think to some extent now we are trying to recover some of the initial energy of the idea.

It must be interesting to go from such a long process to such a synergistic relationship.

Chad: Speaking for myself, I am much more excited by it. I am proud of the record. I am excited about being a band that operates in a traditional way because for so long we were this imaginary entity. It was fun being an imaginary entity, but I am much more excited about being part of a band that can actually throw down. We did some things that a normal band couldn't do because of the way we operated on our recordings. But we could not do some things regular bands can do, like test out an idea one night and change it the next through playing shows. A normal band that operates in the conventional way of touring can discover these things instantly. I'm excited about that. ☺

I'm not interested in things being easy. I am interested in flooding the music with detail. That seems like a feminine value.

Life and Debt is a new documentary by filmmaker Stephanie Black about the harsh economic realities that a third world country like Jamaica must contend with in order to survive in the era of globalization. Premiering at this year's 12th Annual Human Rights Watch Film Festival, *Life and Debt* has been selling out New York movie theaters with no advertising and no distribution. The film's heart-wrenching examples of the complex imperial economics behind globalization are augmented by writer Jamaica Kincaid's militant narration and humorous footage of American tourists vacationing on the island. Black takes us from the farmers in the fields, to workers in the factories, and finally right up to the front office of the IMF where Deputy Director Stanley Fischer explains why it's important to devalue the currency of a "developing" country.

This potentially bleak and depressing subject matter is rendered lively and passionate by Black's unique approach to filmmaking. Dairy farmers, Rastafari elders, former Prime Ministers, day laborers, Caribbean writers, beer-guzzling tourists, reggae artists, and lush cinematography all combine to weave a cultural fabric of adversity and perseverance.

Black has been telling stories about the Caribbean since her first film, *H2 Worker* premiered at Sundance and Cannes in 1990. But those credentials belie this film school dropout's tenacity in working inside and outside the mainstream to finish *Life and Debt*, a film she started in 1991. In the end, Black has created both a personal film and an educational film that throbs with cultural vibrancy, political currency and that doesn't pull a single punch.

Interview by **Tarikh Korula** with **Kevin Prichard** and **Joe Murphy**

Could you talk a little bit about the film?

Life and Debt is a project that's taken a couple of years to make. The aim of the film was to clarify, simplify, and make visible an essentially invisible subject matter—the impact of economic policies on the day to day lives of people whom these policies are ostensibly supposed to benefit, but actually don't.

How did that idea come to you?

From spending time in Jamaica. I had made a documentary called *H2 Worker*, and went down to film the Jamaican farm workers who would go to Florida to cut sugar cane. I went down to Jamaica to film them in their homes and I fell in love with the country—as anyone who's ever been to Jamaica does! This question kept playing in my mind over and over: *how could a country that is this rich, this beautiful and this resourceful, in its people, its culture and its agriculture actually be this poor?* Everyday in the paper there was always an article on whether Jamaica was meeting its benchmark to the IMF. There was this whole rigmarole the country was continually going through on a day-to-day



White leader


A-roll
picture

Tell
A-roll
type of
film

Title
producer

Printer

STEPHANIE



basis to affirm that it was ascribing to the structural adjustment program and connected programs. So by reading the paper day to day and coming to understand something I had no working knowledge of by living in The United States, it became a kind of personal interest.

Most Americans aren't familiar with The IMF, and yet most of the Jamaicans you came across were?

Yeah. Every one.

And that's because it gets coverage in the media?

It's because the policies really *do* have a day to day impact on their lives. For example, in the film, the dairy farmers were subsidized in 1990 and in 1992 they were no longer subsidized. They're *very* aware of what these policies are and how they happen.

You focus not just on the dairy farmers, but on so many industries.

Through the different groups of people who speak in the film, the film takes an almost archaeological approach. Some archaeologists dig very deep in one area and others dig over a broader area. Because these policies have such a far-reaching and widespread—yet incise—impact, that broad approach was the strategy the film took. To show how this repeats and repeats in almost every aspect of the country's productivity and thus its ability to become an economically sovereign nation.

All of the interviewees are so incredibly eloquent. How did you choose who to talk to?

There's something in documentary film-making when you go out into the world and you're very open, you find yourself on this path and you can feel when things are working. You meet one person and talk to them and they say, "Oh you must go and meet this person." Then this person says you must meet that person. There were so many people who could share their stories so eloquently and were very interested in sharing their story. I think a lot of the farmers understood very clearly that this was going to be an opportunity to speak to the American public; they're very aware that these policies aren't coming from the American public, but from institutions that people aren't aware of. The intent of the film was shared by everyone.

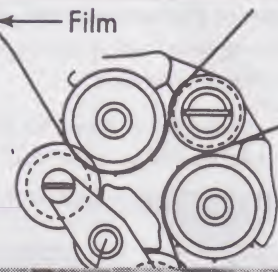
What was the public sentiment towards former Prime Minister Michael Manley, who was forced to sign loan agreements with the IMF?

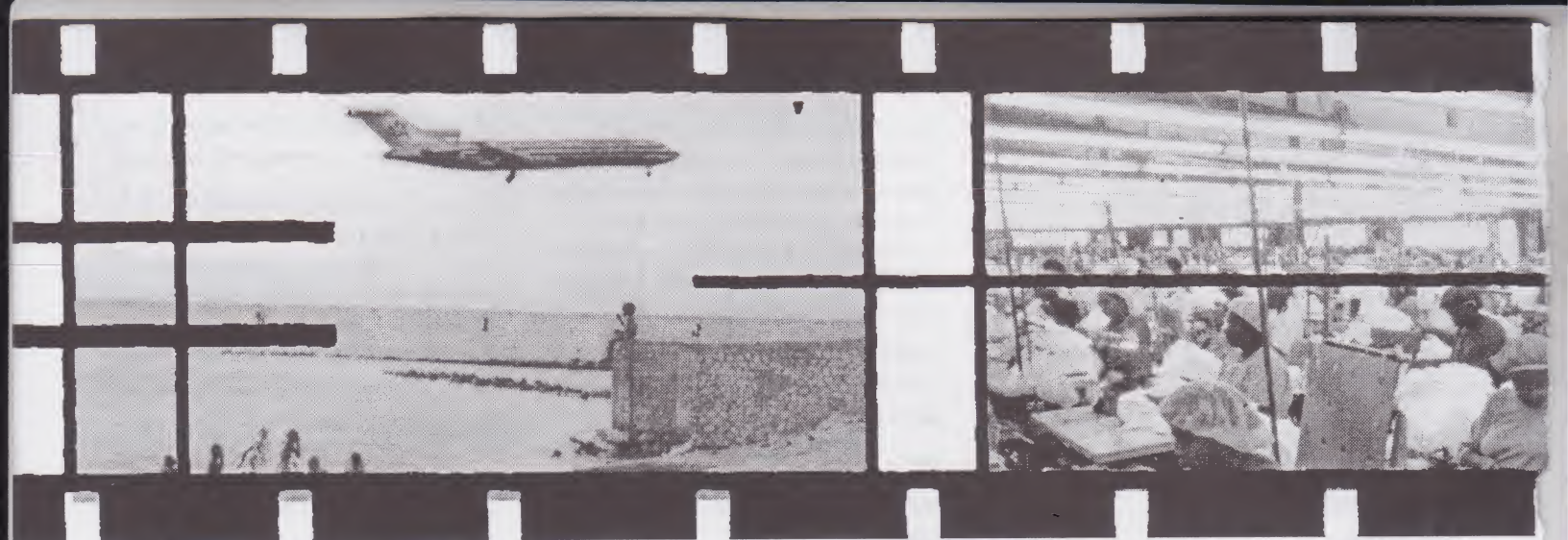
There was an expression in Jamaica for a while that said IMF stood for "It's Manley's Fault," for signing the original agreement. I think that the film allowed Michael Manley to set a lot of things straight.

That was amazing testimony. Both he and the Rastafarians you interview mentioned this metaphor of the double noose that the IMF and World Bank used to devastate Jamaica.

Michael Manley was elected like other leaders in the film [Haiti's Prime Minister Jean-

LIFE & DEBT BLACK





because there has been so little media coverage on the issue and much more on the protesters and the violence of the protests, I think that the film has a kind of

Bertrand Aristide and Ghana's President Jerry Rawlings] on a non-IMF platform. Especially for countries that have a colonial past, there is a need for capital to build infrastructure and set the country on a path where they can start producing for themselves. ¶ In 1973, there was an oil crisis and Jamaica needed foreign exchange to purchase oil to keep hospitals running. Michael Manley tried in many innovative ways to *not* go to The IMF. He went to the oil producing countries themselves and said, "You're making so much money, lend some to us and we'll pay you interest rates. Don't put it in the bank in England, give it to us. We'll pay it back, we'll be diligent, we'll be responsible and then we can develop in a way that's appropriate for ourselves." But he wasn't able to achieve any loans this way. He went to the Soviet Union and was unsuccessful. Eventually, he *had* to go to the IMF—he couldn't have the hospitals shut down; he couldn't have all the manufacturing plants shut down; he couldn't have people with no food. This is a situation that is faced by other countries as well. Aristide was forced to sign with the IMF before he was reinstated. Similarly, Rawlings and other governments have wanted to find an alternative, but there is no other alternative in the world that we're living in right now.

The film touches on the fact that Jamaica is no longer receiving loans, and yet they're still bound to IMF restructuring plans.

That's an interesting thing. When Manley was trying so hard not to go to the IMF, it

actually *meant* something to not go to the IMF. But now, Paterson, the Prime Minister, is so proud that he can announce to his country, "We're no longer going with the IMF," but it no longer has the same significance because they're still paying back loans and still following everything the IMF wants.

It sounds like a hopeless situation.

I *don't* think it's a hopeless situation. It's a *difficult* situation because the foundation has been so destabilized—the elimination of crops, the dependency on American products, a certain mentality in the country that says American products are better. There's a lot of work that needs to get done to get farmers to go back to planting crops; to get the dairy industry back to the level it was. It's going to take work and effort, but I don't think it's a hopeless situation.

Music plays a huge role in the movie. For instance, you had different versions of "One Love" by Bob Marley?

Actually four versions were in there. That was a kind of personal playfulness because that's the only Bob Marley song I don't like. [laughs] I'm gonna get in trouble for anything I say here, but because the tourist board appropriated it, I was just playing with it. There's a Bill Laswell version. There's the original Coxsone Dodd version, there's the version off the *Exodus* album, and then there's a live version as well. Anyway, it's a good song, it's just the commercial use of it afterwards—somehow I don't like hearing Bob Marley in a Budweiser ad.

Do you think that reggae has a big political impact? Here in the US, there's so little mainstream connection between our popular music and our politics.

It's always very hard for me because I'm not Jamaican. I would say that the music in Jamaica doesn't influence directly on the actions of the government. But the music *absolutely* impacts on the cultural environment of the country. A specific song or a specific singer will for a moment gather energies and sentiments together. Sizzla's an incredible voice now for male ghetto youth, for example. He's a very important figure in giving a certain hope, sustenance, food and feeling of crew to young people who are especially alienated and live in the hopelessness of the poverty ahead of them. It's really difficult there if you're not from a certain class. Economic mobility is really hard and it's getting more difficult. Reggae is so much a vehicle and a channel for what people are feeling there. My film is a product of someone who listens to reggae a lot and was influenced a lot by the sentiments and the militancy of the music.

As a white American, did you ever feel at odds with your subject?

When I first started spending a lot of time in Jamaica as a white person it was an interesting experience to all of a sudden be in the minority. You go into a bank and you notice everyone's staring at you, and you're not sure why they're staring at you, so your brain goes all different ways. But then as time went by I think I just forgot because





critical importance in clarifying why there are so many people on the front lines on this issue. I believe firmly that as the consciousness changes, things will change

I've got so many friends in Jamaica. I don't think people forgot I was white, but because I don't see myself, I forgot a little bit. I don't know if that's simplistic or naïve but it's the truth of how I felt.

You got a couple of interviews that seem like they must have been major coups. Stanley Fischer, the Deputy Directory of the IMF, for example. How in the world did you get someone from the IMF to explain all of their imperial policies on camera?

I'm not gonna tell! [laughs] The interview with Stanley Fischer was pretty straight forward, actually. I got funding from ITVS, the branch of PBS that funds independents in the United States. So it was always known that it would go on PBS. When you have that kind of affiliation behind you it's always easier to request an interview. You submit your questions in advance, and then you get the interview and you interview the person, and then the IMF calls you and tells you that they're angry!

What happened?

They called a few days ago and they said they weren't very happy.

So they've seen the film?

No they didn't see the film. I guess they read the reviews.

What did they say?

They said to watch what I eat! [laughs] No they didn't say that. They just said they were disappointed, that I did a hack job,

and that I didn't represent myself correctly. They said I said I would ask some questions and then I asked different questions. But that isn't really true. The questions I asked were very basic questions asking how the IMF works. The goal of the film was to make it very clear, like "IMF for Beginners." The questions I had were along the lines of "What is a structural adjustment policy?" They have people sitting there when you're interviewing in case you do anything that they don't like, but they didn't have a problem. We all left on very good terms and everything was fine. ¶ Actually Mr. Fischer is a very nice man, he was very kind to grant the interview, he was very forthcoming. I think that the IMF believes that what they're doing is helping. When I left the interview that day, I just felt they really believe that this works.

But there's a memorandum that you show in the film, from the World Bank . . .

That says it all failed, I know. But those are internal memorandums.

So do they have two faces? A public face and an internal face?

Well I think what the IMF would say is that when a country goes to the IMF, they're already in trouble. So they would say that it's not like they create the problem. The countries come there because they have problems already. So they feel like they get blamed for a lot of the problems within the country, that they wouldn't be going to the IMF if they didn't have those problems.

How do you juggle your personal life, your film career and your politics?

They're kind of intertwined, because when I thought about doing this film in Jamaica I just wanted to spend time in Jamaica and I had to earn a living. I would do anything that would bring me down to Jamaica. I shot for *Sesame Street* a lot when I was in Jamaica; I shot a lot of music videos; I did a lot of electronic press kits for reggae artists; I did some stuff for MSNBC. Anything that anyone would call me to do, I would just propose to do it in Jamaica and they would say OK. As I was doing all these projects, the ideas for this film just kept accumulating and became clearer and clearer. It's why we were able to shoot the film in a very compact way—four weeks, four different directors of photography, very rigorous shooting schedules but it was a film that was really thought out a lot beforehand.

What's next?

I just want to make sure *Life and Debt* gets out there. I think because there has been so little media coverage on the issue and much more on the protesters and the violence of the protests, I think that the film has a kind of critical importance in clarifying why there are so many people on the front lines on this issue. I believe firmly that as the consciousness changes, things will change. ©

An audio version of this interview can be heard in unedited form at: <http://nyc.indymedia.org/audio>



EL VEZ!

"SAY IT LOUD: I'M BROWN AND I'M PROUD!"



For more than 20 years Robert Lopez has been keeping the world on its toes with projects of one sort or another. From the age of 16 with the Zeros, he provided California with one of its first tastes of punk rock. Moving onward from there, Lopez collaborated in opening the Luz de Jesus gallery, which helped bring Mexican folk art and Day of the Dead culture into public prominence. After playing in groups such as Catholic Discipline (with Jewish, lesbian folk singer Phranc) who were featured in the first *Decline of the Western Civilization* film, Robert arrived at the role that has won him the most notoriety as well as the most influence of his career: Ladies and Gentlemen, EL VEZ!

As El Vez, the Mexican Elvis, Lopez not only evokes the ghost of Elvis but those of Cesar Chavez, James Brown, David Bowie, as well as the voice of the Mexican-American population. At an El Vez show, one generally sees all sorts of people represented: from the rockers who lived the heyday El Vez sings of, to the punkers who see his revolutionary references as a challenge for the future, to the ladies who fawn over his sexy arched brow. But no one is more excited than the Chicanos who see themselves reflected in the American dream come true called El Vez. Just as Elvis Presley was the poor boy done good who represented the American dream of several generations, El Vez is the Mexican-American dream incarnate.

Not to be brushed aside as a shtick or novelty act, El Vez drops more cultural references in his Elvis renditions than the Encyclopedia Mexi-Britannica. When speaking of revolution and taking up arms, he does so with a smile that could charm the granny's panties off of any Congress that would fight him. What drives this man to do what he does? It all comes down to one song: "Say it Loud: I'm Brown and I'm Proud!"

Interview by Luis Illades

Would you say that you are an Elvis impersonator, a channeller, or what?

I am an Elvis *translator*. I translate the story of Elvis through the history of Latino and Chicano ideologies into a musical, historical, Las Vegas-style, costume-changing show

I read an article about you recently that said, "El Vez stands as proof that irony can be used to actually say something." Which I think is really accurate because it seems like these days the idea of irony is a bit played out. How did your show and content get to be where they are? Did you have a certain vision when you started doing this?

Basically, at first, it was a take-off of sorts, trying to be funny and a play on the words "el vez," which is the Spanish pronunciation of Elvis. At first they were just silly songs like "Esta Bien Mamacita," "Huaraches Azules," or "You Ain't Nothing but a Chihuahua." Then the songs got a little meatier or heavier with political context like "En El Barrio" or "Immigration Time." I'm not sure if that's what irony means, but it can be both at the same time. That's the thing I'm trying to do: blur it. So yes, you can make a statement, but at the same time it's campy, silly, and goofy. But I can still say, "Yes, Cesar Chavez was a great leader and yes, Cesar Chavez is a matter of great pride to Latinos and yes, the United Farm Workers was a great work force and a cause for celebration." I can do that, while being goofy at the same time. Is that what people mean by irony?

What I mean is that you cram traditional pop songs that people normally don't pay attention to with all of these new ideas and images, so that there's actually something new and interesting to listen to. It also brings out aspects of songs which everyone is familiar that they might never have paid attention to before. Was it always planned that way or did it develop to that level?

The thing is that I'm taking common ideas or iconography and then stirring them upside down and putting a moustache on it. El Vez is almost like the Duchamp's "Mona Lisa," where he took something familiar and just put a moustache on her. I'm putting a Mexican moustache on the

icon of Elvis and calling it "El Vez." It is part homage and part satire at the same time. The ideas of songs such as "Say it Loud: I'm Brown and I'm Proud!"—which is an adaptation of a James Brown song—is that you change it from "black" to "brown," as in the brown people or Chicanos. At the end of the show I can do a song like "Viva La Raza," which is the same idea as "Viva Las Vegas" but now the girls in the band are dancing with pom-poms and it turned into a cheerleader idea. So it's the same idea, but a different presentation. It's fun and goofy and we're dancing, but if you think of it, it's the same idea with a different twist. That's what the whole show does: it twists ideas. "Are we fascists?" or "Are we just funny?" or am I just jumping around in gold lame?

The interesting thing as you say is bringing up the duality of Mexican or Chicano culture . . .

The whole thing about Chicano culture is the duality. Take the Day of the Dead. You celebrate life by poking fun at the dead. To me it just seems natural to be proud and goofy.

One of the things I always come back to is the duality that exists in Chicano culture in your songs. All of your songs are in English, but you drop some Spanish words as part of jokes or punch lines. But you don't speak too much Spanish since you are from Southern California, not Mexico. There's a song you have called "Soy un Pocho" with the line, "I am a Mexican and I am hardcore / I don't know the language but I know the score."

Again it points to the identity. What is being Chicano? It's more than a language; it's more than the *lengua*. There are thousands of Chicanos out there that don't speak Spanish. Again, how Mexican can I be as El Vez? I don't even speak the language! The whole thing is that it's an impersonator thing: I'm not an Elvis, I don't have black hair, I'm not from Mexico, I don't speak Spanish . . . It's playing on that you can be what you want to be by surpassing it. Like a drag queen taking the idea of what it's like to be real by being more real than reality. For me, that means being so Mexican that I wear pants made of the Mexican flag and carry

around a banner. ♪ "Soy un Pocho" is a great song because so many Chicanos think "That's the story of my life—he's singing about me." It's a neat thing to be separated; it's always better to speak Spanish and be fluent, but it's also part of the culture to be once removed and wonder if you are more Mexican or more American. I can't even talk to my grandparents. It's the weird thing of being Chicano: you're not part of this or that, you're *both*. Getting lost in the translation creates a whole new language and a whole new understanding—or misunderstanding.

Growing up in Mexico, I never felt a problem identifying with Mexican culture and then moving to the US I never had a problem identifying with "whitey" culture either. But *Chicano* culture was always the one that was so odd to me—I always had problems with it. I think that it's because its identity is so much more uniform. It's almost fetishized in a way.

Oh yeah, definitely.

If you're an outsider, it's harder to be a part of Chicano culture. But I think that the more you fetishize it, the easier it is for yourself to have an identity.

It can work with other nationalities and identities too. The whole thing is like a showdown sometimes, like who can speak more Spanish or whatever. The whole thing can work with Irish, Greek, or anyone else too. It's the nice thing if you're American: you try to claim your roots, but you never really are part of them because you're American.

Coming back to the El Vez experience as it manifests itself onstage: the show itself is a huge spectacle. You have many costume changes, backup singers and a four-person backup band, the Memphis Mariachis.

I had a show once with 52 people in LA. There was a 30-piece choir, two stages and a separate band on the other stage.

You've been doing this for a long time . . .

Since 1988. It gets bigger all the time, and changes constantly.

Now you play bigger music halls and can make enough money to pull it off. But when you first started, how did you make it all work?

That was the fun part because I was just making it up as I went along. The first years were really with tapes that I had bought at Graceland. I would just sing louder than the tape so the girls were singing "Immigration Time" louder than the girls on the tape singing "Suspicious Minds." Once at the Wiltern Theater in LA, I was opening for Bobcat Goldthwait. There was this terrible hissing on the tapes so all this crackling noise came through the PA system. I had built a car out of cardboard and would say to the girls, "OK, on this song you drive across the stage in a Cadillac lowrider!" I had the stupidest props. I would bring out a hat and a Sarape and would tell them to dance around it. I would make it up and grab my friends and say, "You can do it. Here just go!" People would do it, because I was always getting into these unusual situations. It was a sense of just throwing it together.

The first time you "did" El Vez, was it just for kicks or what?

The Luz De Jesus Gallery is in LA on Melrose and we had lots of religious art and folk art. We had one of Robert Williams's first shows there along with Mark Mothersbaugh, Coop, Pezz, and car culture art. This was in '84. It was a cool place. We had all of these openings and theme parties for the installations. If Robert Williams had his cowboy paintings, we had a cowboy themed party. We had a show with an Elvis theme and we had an Elvis impersonator at the opening. He was really bad and I thought, "Sheesh, I could do that and do a Mexican Elvis . . . El Vez!" I was never a hardcore Elvis fan, but I liked him. ¶ Everyone was saying that I should go to Memphis, so just as a dare to myself, I figured I'd go there and try to get on an Elvis impersonator contest. I didn't care if I made a fool of myself because I wouldn't tell anyone about it. I figured I was safe, but it went over so well that when I got back home, there was an article in the *Los Angeles Times* about it. Then I got a call from NBC about a

national kid's show and they wanted El Vez on it! So before I ever played in LA, I had already been on national TV! I built off of this hype I was getting. But I had no idea what I was doing. The shows were pretty awful, but it was funny. It just backfired and here I am, 11 years later

This interview seems to be going backward from the present to the past, so the next thing would be to ask you about your first band, The Zeros. You started that band in 1976 when you were 16 years old, right?

Yeah. We would play at the Whiskey in LA and drive the two hours back to San Diego to be in school the next morning. The first show that the Germs played, we played as well. It was a pretty good time. All of those bands like X, Devo, or the Weirdos were all in their mid to late 20s or even 30s. We were the youngest—we were only 16, 17, and 18.

Back then you were a shy, skinny little thing like one of those emo-boys nowadays. Now you're this hunky, outgoing icon. What happened?

I don't know. In my other bands I was always in the background, but El Vez actually put me in the driver's seat. It was up to me to decide what would happen. I do all of the arrangements, the choreography, costumes, produce the records, set up the artwork . . . Its all me. Before, I had ideas but was kind of like, "whatever." I didn't think of these things before. It was just punk rock and I didn't think about it. I guess I'm just a late bloomer.

You come from this punk rock background and now you're doing this thing . . .

Which is the nice thing because El Vez is slightly punk. It's not punk rock music, but it has those roots. I've been on *Oprah* and the *Tonight Show*, in *Newsweek* and *Rolling Stone*, but I'm still on an independent label and many people have never heard of me. It's nice because I have a good number of fans, but its still is very much a grassroots sort of existence.

At your shows you have a very diverse mix of fans. Punk teenagers, Morrissey kids who come because they saw you on tour with him, classic rock guys, grannies, and of course the Elvis fans.

It's a very entertaining show and there's a lot that appeals to all people. The theatrical aspect doesn't have a lot you can compare it to, so people come to see something new.

But the difficult thing to me seems to be who to try to court as an audience. People communicate with each other about the shows, or pass along the information within certain scenes or groups, but yours doesn't exactly fit in to any of them. How does the information spread? How do you let people know that you exist?

I'm pretty lucky. I guess I've been in the right places at the right time. I don't try to figure out how I fit in and I don't try to plan or strategize my career. Luckily, I'm an artist who gets to say "This is what I want to do on this record and I want to wear this stupid outfit" and I can build around it. We're doing this all so I can come onstage with red hot pants dancing like the king of pop. I guess I'm lucky. ©



I am an Elvis translator. I translate the story of Elvis through the history of Latino and Chicano ideologies into a musical, historical, Las Vegas-style, costume-changing show

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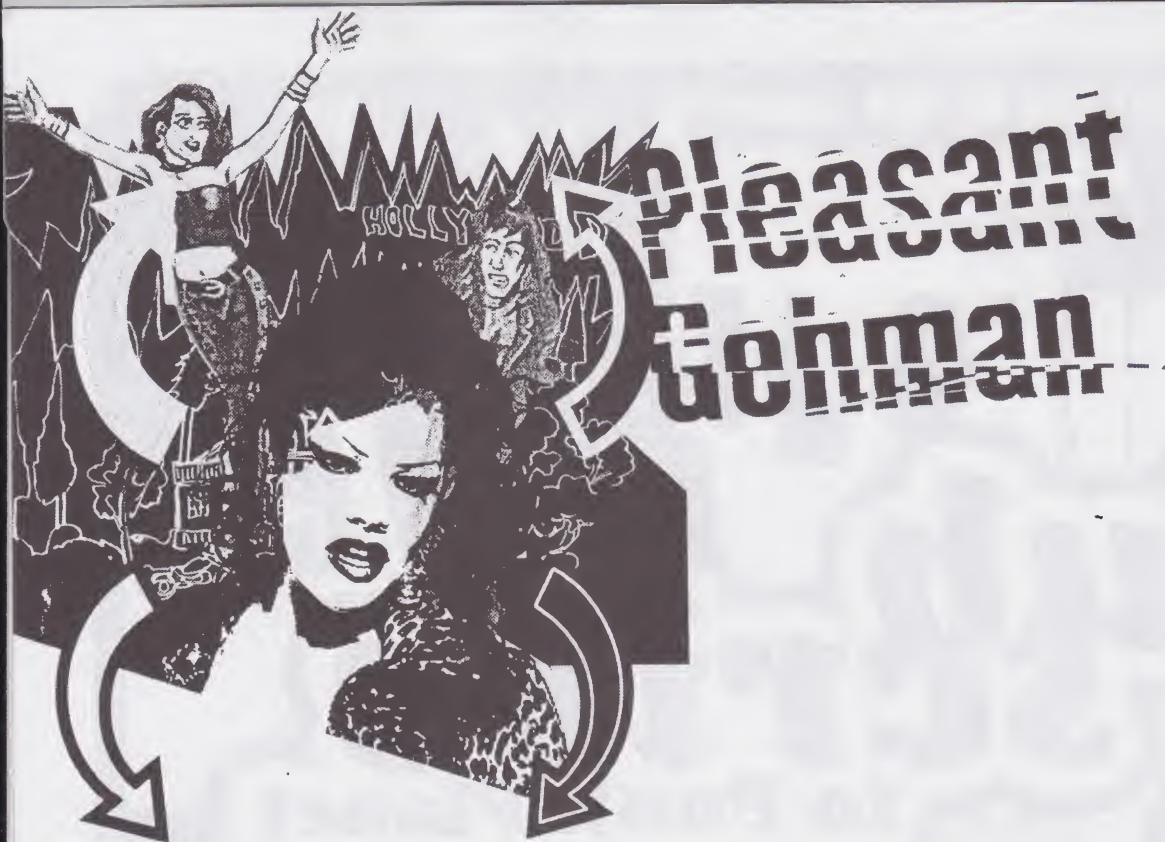
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A common misconception in the western world is that the Chinese symbol of *yin-yang* actually represents two opposing, conflicting forces: light and dark; soft and hard; sweet and sour; weakness and power. But that's wrong. The two halves are actually intended to represent the unified, interlocking, essentially complimentary nature of all matter. When one reaches an extreme, it becomes a lesser form of the other. Too much light becomes a form of darkness; too much passivity can be a form of violence; too much noise becomes its own form of silence.

Here, the theory serves as an illustration of the vast misunderstandings between the East and West Coast punk scenes. Varying ideologies and different means of inciting revolution (on personal, political, and social levels) have often created conflict, mistrust, and/or apathy toward the work of punks on either of America's coasts.

Punk artist, writer, and scenemaker Pleasant Gehman has spent the better part of her life working and creating to close those gaps in thinking. Be they gaps concerning music, sexuality, writing, or simply one's style of living, Plez has been tearing down walls and taking names ever since punk first exploded in Los Angeles in the late '70s. Working in nearly every genre of art worthy of her time (in other words, *all of them*), Gehman has authored four books

(*Senorita Sin* and *Princess of Hollywood*, both published by Incommunicado, and *The Underground Guide to Los Angeles* and her latest, *Escape from Houdini Mountain*, both from Manic D Press), written articles for periodicals of all sizes, done many zines, fronted and recorded with several bands, as well as punk belly-danced her way to personal success and happiness.

A sexual liberal and "modern woman," from far before that term was ever made popular, Pleasant continues to not only push the envelope, but define it. Smart, sassy, and very funny, she constantly and consistently shows how the personal and political can be decadent, extravagant, and yet still real and relevant.

She's the type of artist you'd eagerly stay up all night simply to listen to her vast mass of stories and history. A writer for the future, who stuck in her stakes at the starting gates, Pleasant Gehman is one we'll still be hearing from for years to come.

Interview by Will Tupper

You got into punk during its most formative years. What got you interested in the first place?

It was a natural progression from loving glitter rock—"weird" stuff like Bowie, Jayne Country, Roxy Music, New York Dolls,

and all of them. Mainstream music didn't really do it for me. I read a lot of English music papers, so the first inklings I had of punk looked very interesting to me. In early '76, I was buying the very first singles from New York and the UK.

Was it tough being female and involved back then?

No, my sex didn't seem like it had anything to do with it. Plus, I was raised as a feminist, by a feminist—I had to shoplift my first bra! It was cool to see early punk women, like Debbie Harry, Patti Smith, and Pearl Harbor. And of course being a fan never hinged on being male or female. I was already writing in my diary, and I started doing a punk fanzine in 1977 called *Lobotomy*, which led to more, "legit" music writing, in *New York Rocker* and *LA Weekly*, starting in 1978.

In a short story from your new book, *Escape from Houdini Mountain*, you write, "For over a decade, I lived in one of Hollywood's most famous punk flophouses, Disgraceland."

What was it like there?

[laughs] It was insane! Bands from all over the country were crashing at the house, I was booking the LA punk club Cathay De Grande. We were all poor and living on Top Ramen, dumpster diving for clothes,

scrambling to pay the rent, and drinking all the time even though we were broke. It was a lot of fun, and totally, "underground." ¶ Later, when I had my band the Screaming Sirens—in '83—we met even more people from all across the country, and eventually everyone came to stay at Disgraceland, sometimes for weeks and months at a stretch! I think that pretty much says it all.

Were you aware at the time that you were involved in something that would have such long-lasting results?

Yes, I thought so, even then. People would think I was crazy, but I was convinced that punk wasn't a passing trend or just some crazy fad. I knew enough about music, and the general history of countercultures, even as a teenager, to know this was something real.

What would you say is the biggest difference between punk when you were younger and punk now?

It's going to sound trite, but commercialism. I actually saw a book the other day, *How to Start Your Own Fanzine*, and I was like, "You gotta be kidding!"

What keeps you excited about it, after all these years?

If something has quality or artistic merit, it'll never get old. Look at the writing of Edgar Allan Poe, for instance. People still read and enjoy it, and it's almost two hundred years old. Same with Opera, ballet, classical music . . . belly dancing is like 3,000 years old and it's still amazing! Magic has been performed for centuries. Early Elvis still sounds fresh and great. So does punk rock.

Let's talk a little more about your odyssey and history as a writer.

I began keeping a diary when I was 13, because I just knew that, "great stuff" was going to happen to me as soon as I became a teenager. I was around 17 when I started *Lobotomy*, which, like I said, led to "legit" writing gigs. ¶ The sickest part is that in high school, I was always cutting typing class to get stoned, so I couldn't type at all! I'd read reviews and stories in music magazines, then think that I could write better than the people who were doing them. So one day, I did some sample reviews, sent them in, and they got pub-

lished. Then I sent more in, written in Bic pen on lined notebook paper. The editor called and said, "Do you think you could type this?" I said, "Sure!" The review would take, like 20 minutes to write, but then five hours to type! ¶ A few years ago I got burnt out on music writing. So, in the early '90s, I started to do more art/pop culture/human interest stuff. I still write about music, but I quit going out seven nights a week, which I had done for 17 years straight.

You've worked for seemingly everyone, from the biggest mainstream to the smallest zines. Have you ever felt a conflict between your ideals and your employer? Like, "I can't believe I'm working for this person?"

[laughs] I'm usually just happy to be getting paid for something I've done. I've never "sold out." I won't write about something unless I'm really interested in it. I will write about something that I'm not familiar with, if it interests me. I'd love to write about Destiny's Child or Britney Spears, for example, because I think they're fascinating. But I'd want to ask real questions, not just stop at the publicist stuff.

Just for fun, what would you ask someone like that?

I'd want to cut through the bullshit and engage Britney, or Beyonce in a real conversation. Whether it was a dissection of their life on the road, or what it's like to be a teen superstar . . . not just the fluff like what they're wearing to the MTV awards. Real talk, without a publicist's interference.

You mentioned earlier to me that you were, "raised as a feminist, by a feminist." Do you see punk and feminism as interrelated? In your opinion, does one do the work better than the other, at least in certain matters, like coping with sexism or just discrimination in general?

I do think punk and feminism are related. Theoretically in punk, anyone can do anything—start a band, a zine, a club—and it wouldn't matter what sex you are. Misogyny sometimes rears its ugly head in punk, like violence in the mosh pit, but punk was the first musical genre that had a multitude of female songwriters, bassists, guitarists, drummers — and all-female bands that weren't "put together" by producers. ¶ But I

don't think that being into punk necessarily helps anyone cope with sexism. Education does that. However, it seems most people into punk are more educated than the sheep that follow the masses, so it would make sense that someone who was smart wouldn't put up with any shit, thus leading them into punk. ¶ Also, so many people learn through doing, and the punk movement has shown people that obstacles shouldn't stand in their way, and that they indeed *could* do certain things. That example probably works better than just plain old dogma.

You've talked about belly dancing a few times now. Do you think it's gotten a "bad rap" from the masses, just as punk has?

Belly dancing has been misunderstood by westerners—and Americans, especially—who take it out of its cultural context, and sexualize it. Belly dancing is not strip tease to exotic music; it originally was done *by* and *for* women as a social thing, and also as part of certain rituals—birthing, fertility, and so forth. To get into the whole history would take too long here, but in Arabic countries even grandmas and little three-year-olds know the basic movements. Westerners had never before seen movements of the hips and torso; when they started exploring "The Orient," they'd only done court dances or *Riverdance*-type movements, so they were shocked and scandalized at the movements of the dance. Of course it's sensual, but it's not intended to be overtly sexual. ¶ The same way punk isn't all about nihilism, making yourself ugly, and preaching death—some common misconceptions—belly dance isn't about turning your husband into a sultan, or turning on fat old men! James Bond movies are fun to watch, but that portrayal of belly dancing is about as realistic as most sitcoms on network television would portray punk. Belly dance is beautiful, enlightening, and a total chick-bonding experience—to put it in Western terms!

What advice would you offer someone interested in following your footsteps as an artist?

Keep doing whatever your heart tells you to. Don't stop. Keep going. Get a shitty job to pay the rent, but don't sacrifice your vision in favor of a paycheck. At the risk of sounding like a Disney character, you really can make your dreams come true. You have to believe in yourself. ☺

mouse on mars

It's hard to describe the music of Mouse on Mars. You can make the inevitable comparisons, but they always seem to fall short of capturing what makes the band special. Even when Mouse on Mars sounds like another band, as they sometimes do when they confine themselves to a tight, electronic groove, you'd still rather listen to Mouse on Mars. When my daughter was a newborn, she absolutely adored Mouse on Mars. All we had to do when she was fussy was crank up the volume. At first, this seemed like a fortunate coincidence. But then we realized why she liked it: the music sounds like life in a late-capitalist womb, bombarded by heartbeats and sonograms. For all of its technical precision, their music still manages to breathe deep.

On their new record *Idiology*, the founding duo of Andi Toma and Jan St. Werner has been joined full time by drummer and vocalist Dodo Nkishi to create Mouse on Mars's most wide-ranging record yet. Returning, in places, to their roots in more dance-oriented beats, *Idiology* still manages to come across as a very punk recording. But it also includes new and unexpected elements, like piano, strings, and vocals. It's so good that it will make you cry.

I spoke to Andi Toma in Cologne as the band was beginning preparations for a world tour in support of the album. Although Andi's

English is outstanding, he chose to use a few German words for their resonance. We've left them in the interview, with a translation in brackets following.

Interview by **Charlie Bertsch**

I was listening to your new album *Idiology* with a friend who knows a lot about electronic music and he said, "It's like a history lesson." He heard echoes of many artists who have made music outside the realm of traditional instruments.

I think we're interested in *history*, but not the history of electronic music because we're actually not that interested in electronic music. We don't see ourselves as electronic musicians. That may be why we started using orchestral parts on the new record. That was interesting—it introduced a new aspect to our music.

So if Stockhausen and Edgar Varese aren't high on your list of influences, who are your musical heroes?

Franz Schumacher, the race car driver. Boris Becker, the tennis player.

You're being ironic, right?

Yes [laughs]. I was trying to indicate that it wouldn't make sense for us to speak of


musical heroes. The influences on our work aren't just coming from music. They come from everywhere. If you grow up in a little city, you will have so many influences on your life that are more important than music. The initial impetus for making music may be listening to it. You get this flash and think "I want to do something in music." That's true for us, as it is for most bands. But that doesn't mean we should be described as "Sons of Kraftwerk" or something.

I take it you don't like being asked about Kraftwerk.

[laughs] I don't know *anything* about Kraftwerk!

What do you listen to?

We listen to all kinds of music. We enjoy older music too. We really like it when recordings sound old; when they don't sound like they're coming out of a preset synthesizer or a straight digital device. We like to treat sounds in different ways. Through this labor, we try to get the essence of a sound, which is not something that comes out of a preset but more like something in the background of a sound. We like to look as deep as possible into a sound.



I'm curious how that approach translates to live performance. I've seen you in concert a few times and was struck by how heavily you seemed to rely on analog instrumentation. Do you have a digital framework for the analog sound, or do you try to avoid that sort of thing?


It depends on which version of Mouse on Mars you're talking about. When we toured as a duo as an opening act for Stereolab a few years back, we didn't use computers at all. We just spun different CDs that we'd burned, synchronized them with drum machines and sequencers, and added on a lot of effects.


How about your last headlining tour of the United States, in support of *Niun Niggung*? You seemed to have a more expansive sound for that one.

[laughs] Yes, that was a more expensive sound, because we had a drummer and we needed a sound guy.

You mean "expansive," not "expensive." I'm not sure how you say "expansive" in German . . .

It's OK. I know what you mean! [laughs] Big, extended. That was the rock version of Mouse on Mars. Performing live and working in the studio are totally different things. In the studio we are more like *beobachter* [observers]. We can produce something and then contemplate it and, in a way, try to get closer to it. But when we try to transfer this studio process over to a live situation, the result is very different. When we make a record, we think of the songs as different bands. For us, a song represents a band—a group of personalities





making music. So the effect can vary a great deal depending on the context. This time, our live performances will be a rock show; it really is like rock. When we started going on tour, we were more "dubby." But, over time, we've become a lot more of a rock band in concert. We started rehearsals for the tour today. It should be interesting—Dodo is singing now.

There certainly is a lot more singing and spoken word on *Idiology* than on your previous albums. What made you want to go in a more vocal-friendly direction?

When we were making our previous records, we thought it would be very hard to work with vocals. A lot of people have said to us, "Hey, let's do something together. Mouse on Mars will be perfect with vocals." But it's not so easy. We did work with the singers Laetitia Sadier and Mary Hansen from Stereolab. It was difficult for us, because vocals need so much space. Behind the vocals there is a singer and the lyrics, which were too strong. We weren't used to reducing our music to make room for vocals.

It sure came out good, though.

Yes, it did. But it was a fight! I don't mean a fight between Stereolab and us, it was a fight between the vocals and our music, of not having the freedom to do *everything*. This time around, though, we were more relaxed. We worked with the vocals differently—instead of trying to put them on top of a musical structure, we made them part of the structure.

I can really hear that on the first track "Actionist Respoke." You also have tracks with spoken word. And there the vocals come to the fore in a different way. On "Unity Concepts," for example, there isn't very much besides the spoken word. Were you still thinking of the vocals there as just being another sound?

The sound was very important to us on the track. We had this idea: We gave him the text and as he was trying to translate it into English, we were recording him. He was writing and thinking out loud about the words. We didn't know what it meant

For us, a record is never really done. Each "finished" track on the album is really just the snapshot of a moment.

either. We just wrote down something in German and gave it to him. When he was done figuring it out, he said "I'm finished. We can record now." And we told him, "We're finished too!" We had the sound of the glass of water he was drinking, and the writing, and the thinking. All we added to that was some slight processing of his voice.

That's a great story. You mentioned that you had composed a text in German that was then being translated into English. There does seem to be a strongly philosophical dimension behind the words on "Unity Concepts" and other tracks. Did you set out to deal with complicated, abstract ideas in the lyrics on the album, or was it more of a happy accident?

We're always making *beobachtungen* [observations] in our lives. And we talk a lot. We talk a lot about *bewußtsein* [consciousness]—how it works, how different the consciousness of different people will be in the same situation and how, despite this difference, they can still get along quite well in a community so long as the setting is harmonious. In communication between people, there's a lot of illusion, I think. But still, the illusion that fills our communications and the different kinds of consciousness that come together within them are very creative. Sometimes, there are misunderstandings that lead directly to a certain result—a theory that people can share.

You're saying that misunderstanding has a positive side.

It can have one. It doesn't always have one, but it can. I'm not sure "misunderstanding" is the best word. Our real interest is in what happens when people with different kinds of consciousness try to communicate with each other.

So there's a differential there, one that can be productive. And it's one that wouldn't be there in communications between people who have a similar mindset. That sounds pretty philosophical! Do you read a lot of philosophy?

Actually, I don't, but Jan is quite interested in those sorts of books. He talks a lot about them with me. Also, in our record shop, we carry a label called Supposé that puts out philosophy CDs. It's really interesting material.

When you go into the studio, do you have a sense of what you want to achieve on each track and then experiment until you get what you want?

It's 100 percent improvised! We do go in with a basic idea that contains a rhythmic element and a harmonic element. You try to collect all the sounds in the sequencer and go forward from there. But sometimes we'll start with a single processed sound.

Over time, as you construct the track, do you find that its initial foundation changes?

Oh yes. It's horrible. [laughs] The situation of the song can change every hour! For instance, when we have friends in the studio with us, they'll say, "That's really nice." Then they'll go out for ten minutes. When they come back the song will be entirely different and they'll complain to us. "What are you doing? It already sounded finished."

How do you know when to stop?

We never stop. For us, a record is never really done. Each "finished" track on the album is really just the snapshot of a moment. But we are able to say of those moments "It's alright. We can leave it. It has its own personality and can leave our hands." ©

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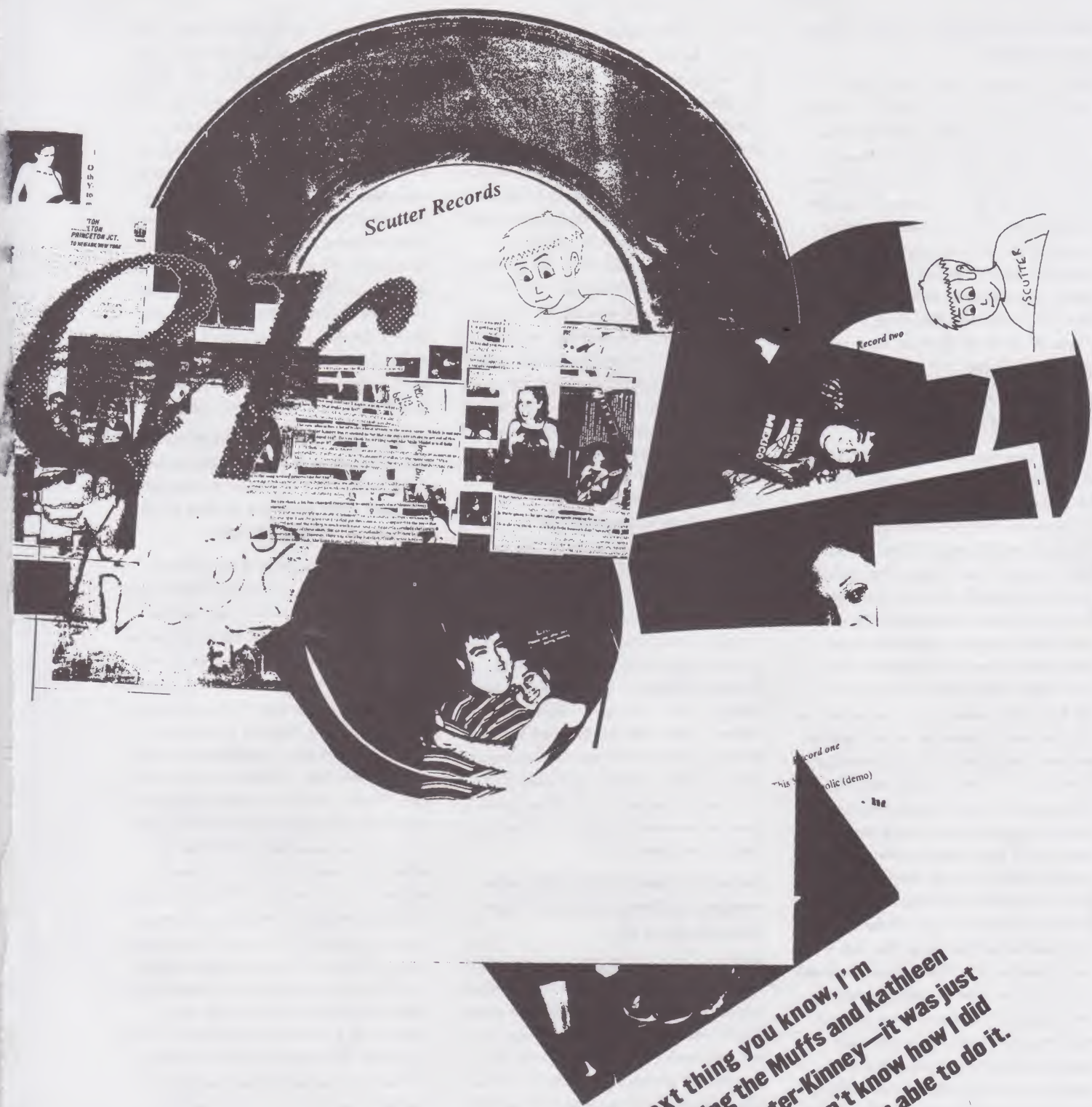
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So where did you come from and how did you get started in punk? What was life like before *Scutter*?

Interview by **Chris Ziegler**

on my favorite music at the time and then some pieces on body issues and things, and I got a really big response. The next thing you know, I'm interviewing the Muffs and Kathleen Hanna and Sleater-Kinney—it was just a big snowball. I don't know how I did it, but I'm glad I've been able to do it. ¶ I don't go through record labels, I don't go through publicists, nothing like that. I just go up to bands and say, "Do you have time for an interview? I do this zine." And it's come to the point that it's really freaky because bands already know who I am! ¶ I think that what people like about *Scutter* is that when I write, I don't focus on just what they're doing as musicians, but I ask about homophobia and how to fight it, or how to fight sexism. Or we talk about education and what classes they took. Or questions can get stupid and silly, like favorite cereals—it depends on my mood. I do try to ask about homophobia and sexuality in everyone's interviews, though.



The next thing you know, I'm interviewing the Muffs and Kathleen Hanna and Sleater-Kinney—it was just a big snowball. I don't know how I did it, but I'm glad I've been able to do it.

Why that extra focus? Why the move beyond music into politics?

When I would read other music interviews, there were things I wanted to know that weren't being asked. Whether it was because I was a queer kid and wanted to know what they thought about homosexuality or how to fight homophobia, or just because I was a big dork and wanted to know what kind of chocolate they liked or what their favorite Sanrio character was. I know I'm not the *only* person who wants to know more than why they wrote that song with an A chord or why they wrote that vocal arrangement.

How do people respond to questions about homophobia and sexuality?

Most of them are really thrown off when I ask that question, but they're like, "Wow, that's cool! You asked that—I can't believe it!" Everyone I've interviewed gives really great ideas and messages. When I interviewed Loli and the Chones, they took it in a way that was really silly but at the same time was very serious—they said the only way us as Mexican youth are gonna have gay pride is when they run the parade down Cesar Chavez Boulevard, a major street in East LA. Then we went into how we have to fight the macho stereotype in our culture, and how when those of us that are straight *do* have kids, we have to teach them that certain views aren't right—just because grandma says homosexuality is wrong doesn't mean it is. ¶ Each interview has been really cool and really inspiring. Corin Tucker was like, "You can do it through art," and she gave ideas like doing zines and having kiss-ins at restaurants and things like that. I even get stories, like Wynne from Tracy and the Plastics who told me about something that happened to them on tour—dealing with these jerks who tried to physically remove them from the space they were standing in. In the interview, we totally got into the story and then that led to questioning what you do as an artist.

So let's turn the tables: How do you think we can fight homophobia and sexism?

As far as fighting homophobia, I think if you can, be out. *Say and do* something about it. I'm not saying put yourself in danger, but educate people, and let people know that people who are gay aren't only what they think the stereotype is. There are so many different types of gay people—we're all so different and we're not evil! Some of us are doing really amazing things and changing society—unfortunately people like Harvey Milk had to die for it. Be out there, and if someone is talking shit, say something. Don't let someone call you a faggot. If you feel safe, say something, but if they're gonna kick your ass and you're by yourself, I totally understand. ¶ At Scutterfest, when we showed up to one of the venues and the people who owned it weren't there, we were standing on the sidewalk waiting and this car pulled up and they were like, "Fucking queers!" They drove away, but then they came back and we were like, "Oh my god!" But we didn't turn around and they just gave up. But it could have been a bad situation. ¶ As for sexism, it's all about education: know what it is for you to be a man. It's not putting down a woman and making a woman second. Being a man is being human and loving and teaching your kids that you're not supposed to disrespect women. I feel lucky that there are kids like me that grew up in the same environment I did, one that's so macho and bullshit, but could see through it. Go out there, go to protests, see what's going on—maybe it's not for you, but check it out.

Besides that moment at Scutterfest, what have your experiences been locally? Have things changed at all?

Well, I kinda stopped going to shows in Orange County—I think a lot of kids there are stuck in the straightedge Reagan years. I don't wanna get my ass kicked because I hang out with bunch of girls, and I'm a fag. But it's gotten a lot better. I remember going to lot of shows and fearing for my safety, and I couldn't have fun because I was so scared—I couldn't act a certain way, in case guys would think it was "gay." But now it's a lot better and that's what I

love about it—I started another zine called *Amazing* and I wrote about how in the girl scene, girls are all having fun, but all the boys are just kind of standing there. It's so sad that all the gay boys don't wanna dance—they're so afraid at gigs that they stand in back. But I think the age group nowadays that's doing music, they're so "whatever" about homosexuality, and so against sexism, that these spaces are becoming safer and safer for girls and for queer kids. There were times where guys would intentionally shove me in the pit, things like that, but that's why I do all the things I do—especially putting on gigs and stuff. I want kids to be able go somewhere and feel safe and watch really rad bands.

So what's your take on Scutterfest? And why did you decide to do a fest, instead of just doing another zine or a record or something? LA doesn't have much of a tradition of DIY festivals, so why take that step?

I was really surprised at the amount of people we drew in during the whole week-end, since it was our first year, and we didn't have any financial backing as far as advertising or anything like that—it was basically word of mouth, flyering, posting on message boards and all that. It was an idea I had in my head for a couple of years now, and then I got laid off of my job, so I was like, "I have time, let me do this." It took me four or five months to put everything together, but even up to two or three weeks before the fest, we didn't even have a venue for Saturday night! A lot of bands, like Pansy Division, Los Superelegantes, and Molly Neuman weren't even confirmed until three weeks before the fest. But it was really *meant* to be! There were all these cool bands in LA that aren't getting the exposure they deserve, so I put them where people could see them. The whole point behind this fest was to raise money for the gay and lesbian youth in the arts scholarship I started. Like you said, LA doesn't really have festivals—at least festivals that target indie pop or punk music. I was tired of not being able to afford to go to Olympia



to go to festivals, so I said, "Fuck it. I'm gonna try it. If it works, it's cool, and if it doesn't, I tried."

How would you describe the Los Angeles DIY scene? For such a big city with such a history, you'd think a lot more would be happening. But it doesn't seem like it is.

I think everyone is *dying* for something to happen here. You would think LA would have all these things going on, but it doesn't. When everyone heard there was going to be a three-day fest and that it was a benefit and was gonna be not only bands and musicians but art and poetry and film too, everyone got *really* excited. I was surprised at how easy it was. ¶ I think the scene here comes and goes—it's always a different type of DIY scene. In the early '90s when I was in high school, the whole riot girl thing really started to happen—riot girl chapters were busting out of everywhere in LA. But then it died down, and then came the boy punk DIY stuff, and then came the indie pop—Ridel High and all those type of bands—and then *that* died down. There are so many things going on in LA at night, so much that you decide not to do anything. You don't know if you should take the risk of paying five or seven dollars for a band you don't know. But now I think the girl band thing and the queer scene and really good punk music is coming back. People are starting to write music zines again. I've been doing *Scutter* for four years, and it seemed like I was the only person doing a music zine anymore. It seems like everyone does personal zines, and that's a reflection about what's going on in music—no one was excited anymore. But it's coming back. There is a scene here, you just have to look for it.

How do you and what you're doing fit in?

I didn't think I really fit in anywhere when I started *Scutter*—it was just a zine to write about my favorite bands, and about how angry I was at the West Hollywood scene. As a gay punk boy who was overweight, I didn't fit in. I didn't fit in West Hollywood, I didn't fit in punk because I wasn't into hardcore or straightedge. I was into indie pop,

and people were like, "That's weak!" So when I started, most of the people who were writing to me were not even from LA. But now, Scutterfest totally validated everything I'm doing—there is a need for something like that here.

What kind of resources are there in Southern California for queer kids, and how would you describe the queer punk scene here?

It's getting better, in the sense that a lot of younger kids are becoming more confident—or if not more confident, at least pissed off. They're picking up guitars and keyboards or drum kits or whatever it may be and saying, "You know what? I'm gonna make you listen to me." Bands are popping up everywhere like Squab or Rotophone or Radio Vago. It's sad that boys aren't doing it, but we'll catch up. The girls are leading the pack.

How does all this connect to the *Scutter* scholarship? And how did you get the idea to start a scholarship fund in the first place?

Well, two years ago, I put out a 7". All the bands on it didn't really want me to pay them. They were like, "Just keep the money for the zine—we really like what you're doing." So I had this money, but I felt guilty putting it towards the zine, and I thought about how cool it would be to be gay and in high school and an artist and have someone reward you for that. I would have *loved* to be in high school and won a gay youth art scholarship! So I just decided I was gonna do it. So next year, two students will be awarded \$1000 and be able to have an art show at Scutterfest. Me and a panel of people from bands that live here—the official *Scutter* scholarship panel—will pick two students. I'm hoping it will drive more kids to want to create art and be active in the gay community, whether it's West Hollywood, the gay punk scene, the gay hip hop scene, or whatever gay community they feel they belong to. I want to inspire other kids to say, "When I'm a senior, I wanna win the *Scutter* scholarship!"

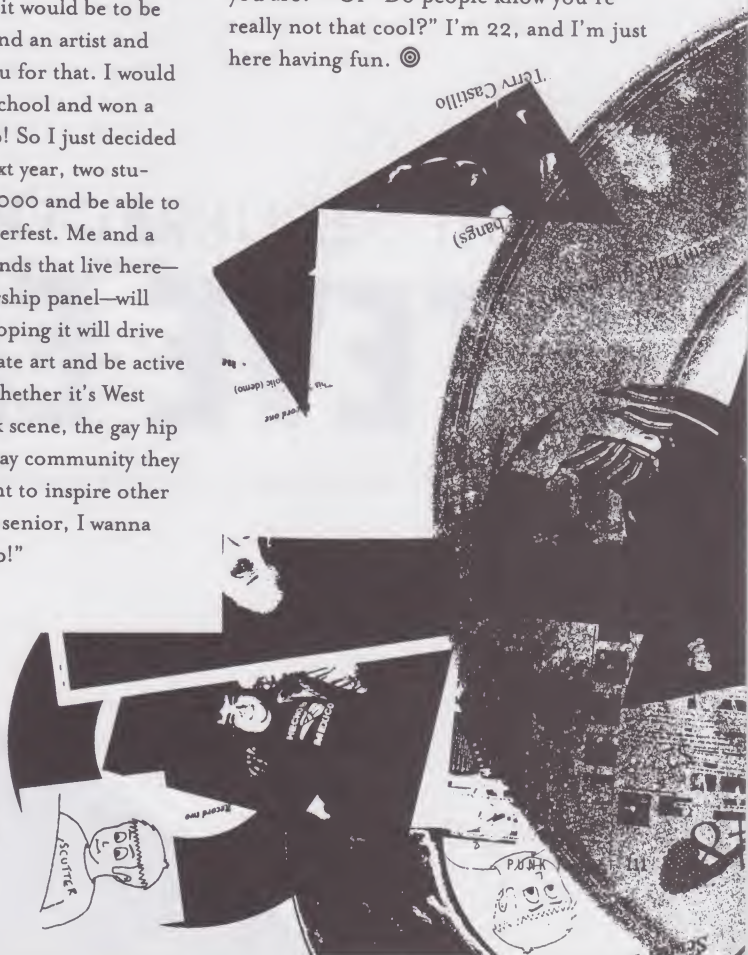
So what's next?

I want to set up a monthly all-ages dance party and have a band play and DJs, and every month have a different theme. Also, hopefully my band \$3 Puta will have a 7" out by the end of the year and we'll play somewhere out of LA. I'm really trying to concentrate on that. I think we're one of the first—if not *the* first—all queer, Chicano/Latina punk bands. A lot of stuff we're writing about has a lot to do with growing up in households that are so *restraining*—we're writing about issues that people might not wanna hear about, like rape, but it needs to be said, so we're gonna say it. And I'm gonna continue doing *Scutter* until people tell me to get over it or until I have to hand it over to someone else. I never imagined I'd be doing all the things I do now. I'm as much a fan as a person putting it all together—at Scutterfest I was out there dancing around. I hope to eventually own our own all-ages venue—we so need something like that. Finally, I just want to keep on creating stuff, whether it's music, *Scutter*, film, or art.

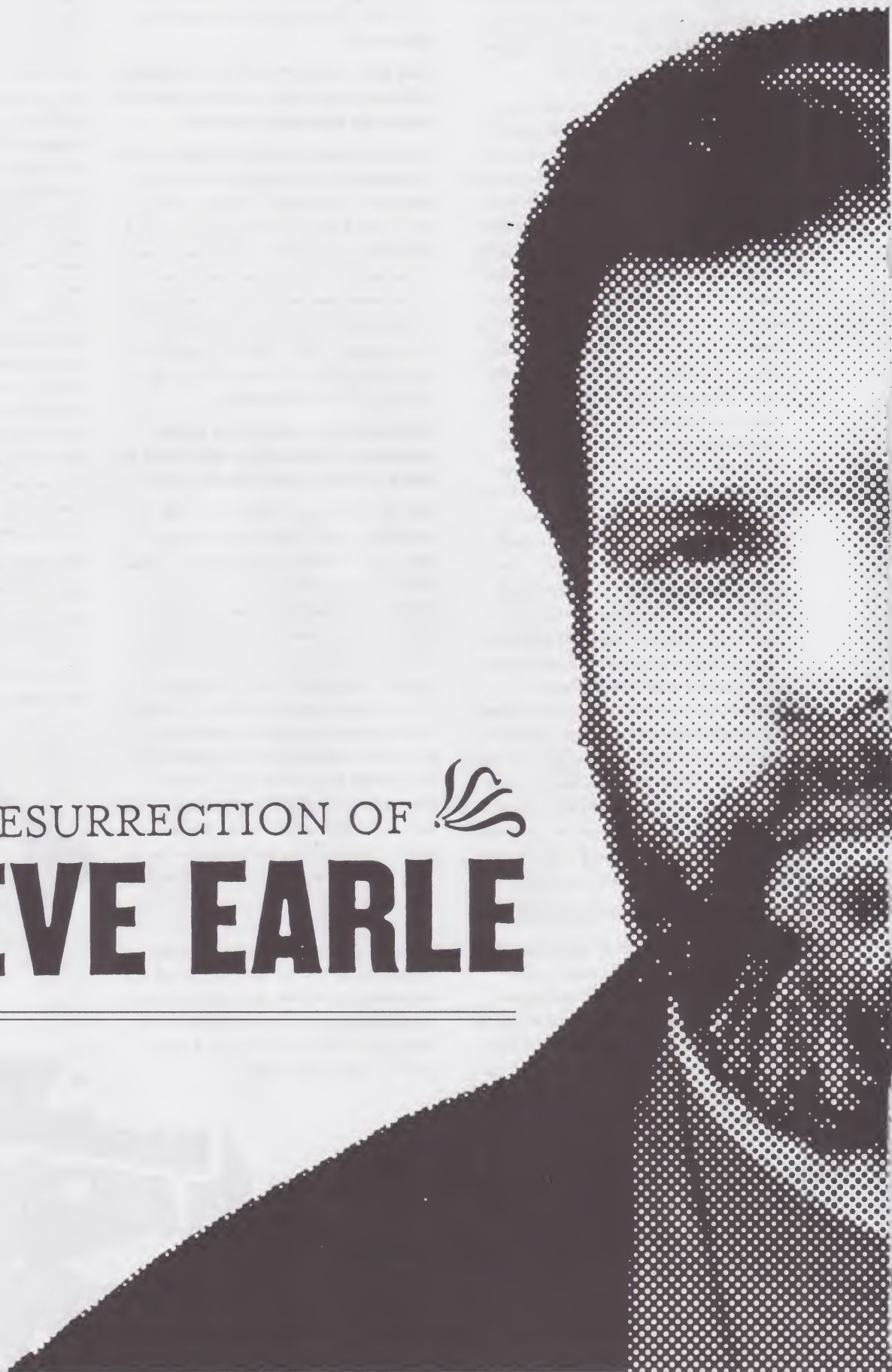
And what's the one question you—as an experienced interviewer—would like me to ask you?

"Do people really know how big of a dork you are?" Or "Do people know you're really not that cool?" I'm 22, and I'm just here having fun. ©

And I'm gonna continue doing *Scutter* until people tell me to get over it or until I have to hand it over to someone else. I never ever imagined I'd be doing all the things I do now. I'm as much a fan as a person putting it all together.



THE RESURRECTION OF 
STEVE EARLE



Steve Earle has made a career out of defying easy categorization and shifting musical styles like some artists change clothes. Through his forays into country, folk, punk, reggae, bluegrass, and beyond, his wide-open, truth-telling spirit has remained constant. Whatever genre employed, Steve's music has embodied what country songwriter Harlan Howard once called "three chords and the truth"—a description of country music at its best that is equally applicable to punk. That connection speaks volumes about why Steve Earle would be featured in such an unlikely forum as *Punk Planet*.

Steve's most important defiance of expectation came over the past eight years as he slowly and painstakingly reconstructed a life shattered—and nearly ended—by drug addiction. To call it a "resurrection" is to barely indulge in hyperbole, so dramatic and seemingly miraculous has been his artistic, personal and political revival. Not only has Steve been able to resuscitate his career while simultaneously gaining more control of his artistic and business life and writing arguably his best work, he has also taken a step past his well-documented advocacy of causes like the abolition of the death penalty and the struggle for economic justice to direct and sustained activism.

I first met Steve Earle during his participation in the Fast And Vigil Against the Death Penalty in 1999, an annual event he has joined for the past five years. When he experienced an equipment breakdown during a free concert on the steps of the Supreme Court during the vigil, I offered my assistance. We ended up in conversation and became friends and co-conspirators. As a result, the group I work with, Positive Force DC, has helped to provide sound and stage for the last two Vigil concerts, held each year in early summer on the Supreme Court steps here in DC.

As you will see in this interview, Steve's experience of near self-destruction fuels his current work. As he told me once in another conversation, "If I survived, there must be a reason, there must be something I am meant to do." This sense of mission—generously leavened by a self-effacing sense of humor—

animates everything Steve does, from his music, to his activism, to his recently published collection of short stories, *Doghouse Roses*. It is a spirit very akin to the best of what punk has offered, a genre that Earle has followed since its inception in the mid '70s.

This conversation was taped last summer outside DC's 9:30 Club during the *Transcendental Blues* tour. It sat for a while as I finished work on my book, *Dance Of Days*, but finally is reproduced here in only slightly abridged form for your enjoyment.

Interview by Mark Andersen

I want to start by talking about the crossover that has developed between punk and country music—the magazine *No Depression* being the most obvious example.

That's a result of it, but that's actually a late thing. My partner in E-Squared Records, Jack Emerson, was the original bass player for [the seminal country punk band] Jason and the Scorchers. Jack was going to Vanderbilt and his dad basically bribed him to stay in school [laughs]. He was going to quit and go on the road with the Scorchers, but his dad gave him the money to make their first EP, *Reckless Country Soul* if he would promise to stay in school. Jack and I met going through the manufacturing process of that record, trying to figure out how you manufacture a 7" EP. ¶ I had been in Nashville for several years in the mainstream music business and no one would let me make a record the way I wanted. I panicked when my oldest son was born—as new parents will do—and I actually went through a period of really trying to write what I thought they wanted. Even when I was trying to sell out, nobody was buying! [laughs] ¶ During that time, Jack and I saw the Cramps. Jack had a shift on the Vanderbilt radio station and lost his air shift because he segued from the Cramps into Johnny Cash—the program director there didn't get the Johnny

Cash part! [laughs] My head was pretty much in a singer/songwriter place in the '70s, but I had seen the Sex Pistols . . .

You saw the Sex Pistols!?

Yeah, I saw them at Randy's Rodeo in San Antonio in 1978. I grew up a block from Randy's Rodeo. At the time, I hadn't really been listening to any rock and roll. For me as a songwriter, the Clash interested me more than anything else punk just because they were singing about something! I could relate to that because I grew up playing coffeehouses during the Vietnam War. ¶ Seeing the Sex Pistols was an accident. I'd already moved to Nashville and had been there for two years when my publishing company ceased to exist. There wasn't an office in Nashville anymore, and people at the LA office thought my songs were too country, so I moved to Mexico and lived on \$150 a week 'till the contract ran out! [laughs] I would commute back up to Austin to cash my checks. I was sitting in Austin with some friends on one of those check-cashing trips and somebody said "The Sex Pistols are playing at Randy's Rodeo, where the fuck is that?" I said, "I know where Randy's Rodeo is, I grew up a block from there!" Now, Randy's was a place I was scared to go into. It was where all the guys who beat the fuck out of me hung out. And sure enough, it was weird because there were kids who came down from Austin, since the Sex Pistols didn't play Austin, and it was crazy. That is the show where Sid Vicious got hit with a beer bottle three songs in and just staggered around the stage bleeding for the rest of the show. There really wasn't very much bass from that point on in the show, just a lot of bleeding . . . [laughs]



What did you think of the whole evening?

I didn't see a great show, but I thought it was kind of cool that it was even going on in that neighborhood.

Jason and the Scorchers were really among the first to connect country and punk. There had been little bits of crossover—Red Rockers doing “Folsom Prison Blues,” Elvis Costello with his George Jones influence, Patti Smith doing Hank Williams covers. But in terms of trying to connect the shared raw, simple truth-telling energy, it's really Rank And File—who came out of the great early California punk band, The Dils—and the Scorchers who I think of as the pioneers. I remember hearing the phrase “three chords and the truth” as a description of punk and thinking “right on,” only to be astonished to discover later that it was actually Harlan Howard's shorthand definition for country!

Harlan is a wonderful example of where country songs originally came from and what is wrong with Nashville today. In Nashville in the early '60s—which I think was the strongest period creatively for commercial songwriting in Nashville—there was one brief moment there where its roots were still very firmly in the soil it came from. But then the writers started stepping out, people like Willie Nelson, Roger Miller, Harlan and Hank Cochran and the apprentice generation, folks like Tom T Hall. ¶ Very shortly after Tom, there were some artists who really got it, who started pushing these writers and actually fostered their growth. Bobby Bare was the first person to sign Billy Joe Shaver, for example. There was this little community that contributed very heavily to the mainstream of country music but was very much to the left in every way imaginable! [laughs] Everybody knew that the songwriters were the lunatics in town, they were the ones up all night at JJs, loaded to the gills on speed! The Outlaw thing started when some of the artists started hanging out with those writers and some of those who had only been

writers started making records, like Willie Nelson and Tompall Glaser and Tom T Hall. ¶ I was really fortunate in that I got there at the tail-end of that, while the community was still very open. You would have people like me and David Olney—who were absolute street-level—in the same room with Guy Clark and the whole Texas crowd—who were pretty firmly established by that time—and people who came through town like John Prine and Neil Young in the same room with a guitar going around. But then cocaine came around and killed that overnight because it created a caste system. Speed was cheap—no-one ever hid in the bathroom trying to keep all the speed to themselves! [laughs]

That was an interesting situation, because you've got this huge machine in Nashville and these folks were both kind of participating in it and on the outside of it too.

Well, what happened was that there was this scare. When *Guitar Town*—my first album—came out, we referred to that time as the “Great Credibility Scare of the 1980s” in Nashville! [laughs] Every so often that community says “we're out of control” and then they will see something and see the value in it and then try to clone it. I've seen two or three of these solar flares in country music since 1974. History has a tendency to repeat itself. ¶ Bluegrass is a really good example. Bluegrass was once a mainstream part of country music, but then it was seen as not commercial enough—too many banjos—so bluegrass became outlaw music. In Nashville in 1974, if you wanted to get pot and talk about something that was a little to the left of center politically, you went and found the bluegrass players because a lot of them were old hippies and some were real live hillbillies who had been exposed to all of that stuff. The bluegrass community was this left-of-center community, marginalized by the mainstream of country music. Shortly after that, the Texas singer-songwriter “cosmic cowboy” thing scared the fuck out of Nashville, and they started doing it again—they started marginalizing everybody. Now to jump to the punk stuff, there is a period, you know seven or eight

years ago, where you got into this poseur punk thing.

You mean the “grunge” thing?

I saw that from a really weird place because I was heroin addict for one thing, and I was married to an A&R person for another. I was like a Seattle widower because my wife was in Seattle all the time trying to sign anything that moved! [laughs] Now, when Nirvana came along, that was a pretty fucking exciting thing. I also loved Mudhoney and the Screaming Trees.

And you played with the Supersuckers, right?

Yeah, but they come from a different place; they're Arizona guys who cut their teeth on Cheap Trick. They moved to Seattle when everybody was moving to Seattle, when it was easier to get a record deal there than if you were in LA. They are really dear friends of mine and I think they're one of the best hard rock bands in America live, period.

It seems like in the aftermath of Garth Brooks and Shania Twain selling so many records, there is a great deal of pressure on country musicians to move towards a more pop sound. That is very analogous to the crisis that happened in the punk community during the “Smells Like Teen Spirit” time.

Sure. But when that happened, it wasn't Nirvana's fault. It was the record labels' fault. Nirvana was as big as they were simply because they were *that fucking good*. What Nirvana had that no other band in Seattle really had at the time—except for a couple of the older bands—was songs with melodies that stuck. That hadn't happened in rock in a long time. ¶ In the '80s, every kid that went to college and was the director of his college radio station and became an A&R person suddenly—for economic reasons—turned their baseball cap around backwards and discovered hard rock for the first time! [laughs] Next thing you know, we were overrun with hair bands. My wife signed Guns 'n' Roses! [laughs]

So now we know who to blame!

Yeah, it's Teresa's fault.

What aspects of punk appealed to you?

The punk stuff that always will stand out for me is Patti Smith, Jim Carroll,

Henry Rollins, Jello Biafra . . . People that took it into some area that was either political or literary.

Or both. Fugazi seems to fall into that category—what do you think of them?

What most impresses me about Fugazi is their commitment to what they believe in. If you have stuff that you really believe in, being on a major record label can really get in the way. I have been fighting that all of my career. I've had a bunch of things that I have tried to do that I flat out *couldn't* do because I was on a major. But I think artists need to be more responsible. I hate to hear an artist sitting around whining, "It's just the major record labels, they're corporate and they suck." Duh! They're corporate. They are *supposed* to suck! But it's perfectly OK to take their money if it is what you need to do to make art. You have to remember that you took it, and then you let it go at that. ¶ I'm 45 years old and

been able to get some of that "economics of scale" payback. By keeping it simple and in their hands, they've been able to do well financially, better than other bands at that level of popularity.

I totally respect that, but being on a major was something that I *had* to do. For one thing, I did have a number one country album and I don't think that I would be where I am now if I had never had that in creating a career for me. I think that everybody has to go their own route, but I also think that everybody should be working towards where Fugazi started out. I don't think—depending on what kind of music you play—that it is realistic for everybody to do that. If you do that, you also have to make sure you don't end up where Jello Biafra is being sued by every fucking body that he knows. ¶ When I put

I'M A LOT BETTER PERSON THAN I WAS FIVE YEARS AGO. BUT I DIDN'T DO IT TO BE A BETTER PERSON, I DID IT JUST TO NOT BE DEAD!

for the first time in my career I have 100 percent of my publishing and own my masters from my last two recordings. For me, the path was just the way it came down. It was easier for me to get my records made by corporate money than it was doing it out of my pocket. I did it once out of my own pocket and then later in my career I started doing that again. I used Warner's money to start E Squared and kept ownership of E Squared. I lost my masters, but I kept ownership of the trademark and we built a reputation. Then Warner told me I couldn't make a bluegrass record, so I left. We put *The Mountain* out on our own and that was the first master that I owned myself. Fugazi and a few other people pioneered controlling all of that stuff from the ground up.

That is why the example of Fugazi seems so important. On a practical level, they have

out *Train A'Comin'*, I was a barely recovering heroin addict just out of jail, just a few months clean, oscillating at about 900 different frequencies. I was really kind of a mess, but really needed to make a record so I went in and made one for this little label whom I'd signed a contract with for one album. I thought, "This is going to be really easy, I won't have any of these wars that I had with the major record labels, this is a recovery decision." Those guys re-sequenced my record without even talking to me and they never paid me a dime! I ended up having to buy the record from them and sell it to Warner to really make any money out of it. No matter what size the company, a crook is still a crook.

To shift gears some: Probably my two favorite shows I've seen you play have been the protests in front of the Supreme Court. This punk activist collective I am part of, Positive

Force, has worked with Fugazi, Bikini Kill, and a few other bands to do similar events down there. That was part of what sparked my interest in doing this interview, because I sensed a shared spirit. A lot of musicians don't want to do that sort of thing; maybe they have some political commitment, and will write about it, but to do a gig like that . . .

And that is OK. I wasn't an activist 'till recently. I've been opposed to the death penalty all my life and I wrote songs about it, but I wasn't always an activist. That is something that happened in the last five years. Part of it is a recovery thing: You are going through a process of bettering yourself on a day-in, day-out basis just to stay alive. I'm a lot better person than I was five years ago. But I didn't do it to be a better person, I did it just to not be dead! [laughs] I have stepped over this line in my life where I have to go all the way or not at all. And the activism work has gone along with that. By the same token, like today, I have spent all day today on Capitol Hill and that is kind of a very weird deal!

Right in the middle of a rock tour! [laughs]

But you know what it's about? I don't want anybody else to die. I don't want any more blood on my hands, because if my government kills people, then I'm killing people. That's really where my core objection to the death penalty comes from.

I have been a fan of your music for a long time, through friends in the punk community who turned me onto *Guitar Town*. But quite honestly, when I heard just how bad your drug problems were, I didn't think that you would live. It was very moving for me when you gave your little intro before "Christmastime In Washington" at the Supreme Court two weeks ago, about how your life had to change after you got clean.

Well, "Christmastime In Washington" is my midlife crisis song. It is about the early '80s, about the time I had the rockabilly band, when my music probably got the least



I WAS ASKED TO TALK TO THIS ONE GUY ON DEATH ROW AND I DIDN'T MAKE THE PHONE CALL—I PUT IT OFF. I WOKE UP ON MONDAY MORNING TO THE NEWS THAT HE HAD BEEN EXECUTED.



political that it ever was. I was trying to write songs that I could get cut, because I had this little tiny person that I was suddenly responsible for and it scared the fuck out of me. I kind of forgot about all of that radical stuff. Even with the convictions I had, I didn't really *do* very much about them. I didn't think that there was anything I could contribute. But then I almost died and when I came back, I remember wondering what I was going to do when people started calling me. ¶ Before I ended up in jail, I was asked to talk to this one guy on death row and I didn't make the phone call—I put it off. I woke up on Monday morning to the news that he had been executed. I dropped completely out of the movement. Shortly after that, I dropped completely out of my whole life. ¶ I was staying well clear of the issue after I got clean. Then Tim Robbins called me about *Dead Man Walking*. Working on the soundtrack with Eddie Vedder, playing a concert with everyone involved in the soundtrack, meeting Sister Helen Prejean, and the folks who did Journey For Hope From Violence to Healing and Murder Victims' Families For Reconciliation for the first time made me an activist. That is where I learned activism from over the last five years.

What was so beautiful for me about your story is that it was like a resurrection, in a way.

It was, without a doubt. It was definitely part of the healing process for me. I hurt a lot of other people, like my kids. I wasn't home very much and when I was at home, I was in the bathroom. I have lot of amends to make. I am an incredibly fortunate person. I mean, look where we are [motions to the Shaw neighborhood outside the tour bus]. I used to buy dope in this neighborhood. I almost died in a neighborhood like this one in Nashville. I

am really lucky to be sitting here sucking air *at all*. I make an embarrassing amount of money for a borderline Marxist! [laughs] So it becomes an imperative for me at this point in my life to put something back.

It's a challenging moment in this country right now, especially for those of us whose politics were formed by the experience of the Vietnam War and Watergate. I am old enough to fit in on the tail end of that. We seem to have a country where more and more people are being incarcerated and killed by the state.

Prisons are the millennium's version of the military industrial complex. Huge amounts of money are being made building prisons.

And in the meantime, the gap between the rich and the poor—in this time of alleged record prosperity—just grows and grows.

And nobody cares. We're not even trying to make it look good anymore. In the '60s even Republicans wanted to look like they cared about poor people. Now we really do seem to believe that it is all right for people who aren't "entrepreneurial" to starve to death.

Look at the presidential campaign. The gap between the rich and the poor was really not even an issue.

It's amazing.

What do you think the responsibility of the artist is in such a moment? What has been good about punk, the Texas folk scene, or folks like Woody Guthrie or Joe Hill is that culture and politics met and created a community of resistance which enabled—in the lean times—for the vision of a transformed world to survive and, in the boom times, for dramatic steps to be made, even the illusion, or reality, of revolution.

Right. Well, the closest thing that I know to "the revolution" that is going on right now is the Kensington Welfare Rights Union in

Philadelphia, just because it is a real peoples' revolution. The KWRU is poor people. Republicans and Democrats alike have gotten to be on the same page, talking about poor people pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. Well, first they've got to have fucking boots! [laughs] The Kensington Welfare Rights Union is about precisely what is says it is. It is about everybody having the *right* to a roof over their head; everyone having the *right* to enough to eat; and everyone having a *right* to medical care! And if you have that, then you don't raise pissed off marginalized people who you have to be scared of on the way to your car when you leave work. It is really simple. ¶ Right now we are in a very materialistic time, people are "dot.com this" and "mutual fund that." We've raised a whole generation of kids who think that they are destitute if they make less than \$85,000 a year! [laughs]

And who look down on kids in a neighborhood like this because they're on the corner selling drugs just to have piece of that.

I lived in a neighborhood like this for four years. They tell white kids that they can be President of the United States. In neighborhoods like this, all these kids are doing is emulating the only people that they have seen in person who have *anything*. The only people who have these new kicks and new cars are drug dealers. So what the fuck are you going to do? Especially when everything that screams at you off the television or radio says you are supposed to have that shit. ¶ But activism and the movement is not dead. I was in Tennessee, at the university, serving a sabbatical during my last off period, and this kid came up to me who was 17 and started asking me about the death penalty. We put together this whole chapter of the Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing and some of the kids at the college got into it. So it still *does* happen and it still *can* happen. I don't think it dies, I think *people* keep it alive. ¶ Take the smaller picture for example: I appreciate your help with the death penalty gig [at the Supreme Court]. When things happen like that, with you walking up when the equipment breakdown was going down, that is what keeps it going. Absolutely. Moments like that are what keep *any* movement going. Always has been, always will be. ©

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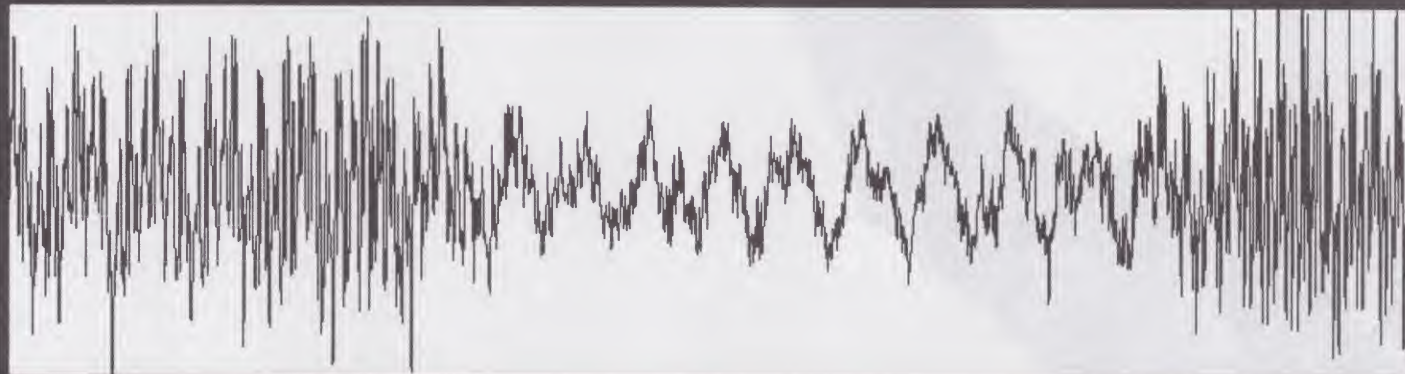
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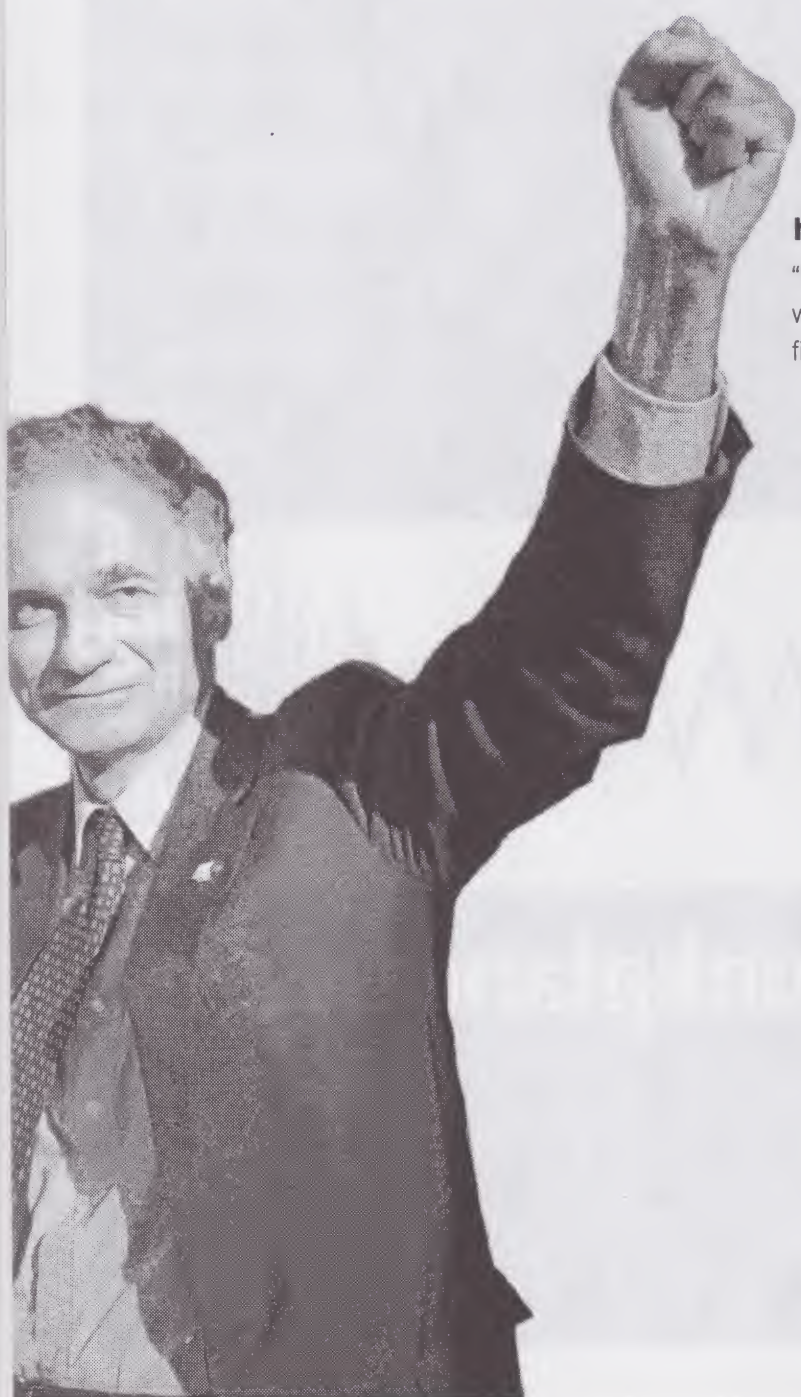
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nader.

"You've got to evaluate a party not just on what it proposes, good or bad, but what it fights *vigorously* for."

If New York socialite and fundraiser for Hillary Clinton, Harry Evans, had his way on election night, Ralph Nader would be a dead man right now. At an alcohol-soaked celebration of Clinton's Senate win last November, it was announced that Florida would be the deciding state in the Gore/Bush contest. "I want to kill Nader," Evans blurted. His suggestion was met with approval from the assembled VIPs—including Senator Clinton herself, who replied "That's not a bad idea!"

Nader still walks today (Evans has since apologized), but in many ways he was killed on election night—or at least disappeared. Search through the last six months of major newspapers and you find nary a mention of a man who was on the cover of those very same papers last November (a similar search for Al Gore, who has fallen off the face of the earth, turns up plenty of entries in each paper). Additionally, left-leaning groups and leaders of all stripes have turned their back on Nader. "I'm not going to answer his phone calls," Robert Musil, director of Physicians for Social Responsibility told *Mother Jones* magazine. "He cost us an election at what may be a turning point in American society," explains Alice Germond, executive vice president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League. A pariah to some, a prophet to others, Nader has certainly come a long way

from being a 29-year-old attorney who hitchhiked to Washington DC from Connecticut and lived at the YMCA.

After arriving in DC in 1963, Nader consulted for the US Department of Labor while also doing freelance writing and investigative journalism. Two years later, he published the book *Unsafe at Any Speed*, a savage condemnation of the auto industry that resulted in a series of safety laws passed in 1966. It also resulted in a windfall of money for Nader, who won a suit against General Motors for invasion of privacy, after the automaker attempted to discredit him.

With that money, and the notoriety garnered from his book, Nader launched a full-scale attack on the corporate dominance of public life, culminating in the founding of Public Citizen in 1971.

Through Public Citizen and the many organizations that operate under its umbrella, Nader has played a part in the passage of dozens of laws over the last 30 years including the Clean Air Act and the Freedom of Information Act, as well as the creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Consumer Product Safety Administration.

In the years leading up to his infamous bid for president, Nader had become an outspoken critic of the growing power of multinational cor-

porations and the governments that kowtow to them. An outspoken advocate of the anti-globalization protesters that have massed outside of WTO and World Bank meetings for the last two years, Nader has lent an older, mature voice to a movement dominated by youthful vigor.

But Nader's past advocacy work is ignored by those that vilify him as "costing Gore the election." While a simple glance at the numbers refute that charge—the 308,000 Florida Democrats that voted for Bush far outweigh the 95,000 votes in the state that Nader received—Nader's critics don't let him off the hook easily, which could spell disaster for the years ahead. With Democrats all but refusing to speak to Nader or his supporters, it seems as if the lessons of the 2000 election will have to be learned all over again. As *Counterpunch* newsletter wrote in the aftermath of Gore's loss: "[the] message to the Democrats is clear. Address our issues, or you'll pay the same penalty next time around. Nader should draw up a short list of Green non-negotiable issues and nail it the doors of the Democratic National Committee."

After many attempts during the election season, *Punk Planet* finally had a chance to speak with Ralph Nader in June.

Introduction by **Daniel Sinker**
Interview by **Brian Duss**

It's been about six months since the election. You've already done 14 fundraisers for the Green Party and spoken in about 25 states at colleges and universities. The Campus Greens have been up and running since January, and Citizen Works is about to launch. If you don't choose to run in 2004, what do you think the future of the Green Party is?

The future of the Green Party is going to be at the local level at the beginning. That's where they're winning races at a pretty high percentage. In the spring of 2001 there were several elections where Wisconsin Greens won five out of five seats they contested, and it's going to proceed like that next year. We're going to get hundreds of people of all ages to throw their hats in the ring and run. Every time they run, they build an epicenter of Green supporters among their neighborhood. So that's where it starts and then it goes up to the state and federal level. But right now the big opportunities are at the local level, given the two-party lock on the system. That lock is less effective in many local races than it is on the state and federal levels.

Do you think that since the two parties have a stranglehold on the larger elections, they'll be able to keep Greens and other parties out of local elections, especially the important ones such as school boards, zoning, etc?

Well, in some places they will, but in other places they'll either be caught off guard or there'll be nobody running for these seats. There are a lot of seats at the local level where city hall has to beg people to run. Sometimes only one party is dominant. When you're working at the local level you can really eyeball people and talk to them. Television ads don't mean as much as door-to-door meetings in the neighborhood, in church basements, in union halls, you know, over the picket fence. That's how the Greens can really overcome a lot of the entrenched parties. But, once they get a majority, once they are really coming on strong, they're going to incur more opposition that is organized by the other parties.

Of the three main candidates—I know there were more, but you're the only candidate who went to all 50 states—were you encouraged by what you saw? Or did you learn a lot of things that made you think that the

future's a lot brighter than some people thought earlier on?

We were always encouraged because you see people who have great ideas that should be put to work; you see people who have things on the ground like an inner-city school that's working very beautifully. I met a guy on the plane who has a solution for recycling all these plastic water and soft drink bottles into a substance that can put a coating on these large paperboard cartons that transport chickens and meat products all over the country to supermarkets. Right now, International Paper uses a chemical that is a toxin and has a lot of problems with it. But this guy's company recycles millions of these bottles into relatively benign materials. ¶ You see a lot of these types of things all over the country. You see organic farmers working away; you see people who can advance energy conservation. You don't see that on national television. You really have to go to the local areas to see it. You see people put on wonderful cultural events, they don't rely on Hollywood or New York City—it's a real, indigenous-type culture. That's what the political movement is all about, it's connecting with these people and connecting the political party with the civic and cultural efforts that are going on. ¶ The other thing is that you meet new people with new energy. You meet people of all ages: people who have experienced the peace movement or people who are anti-sweatshop on college campuses. To get anywhere, any political movement has to have new human energies—especially the energy of young people. The Green Party is the party of the younger generation, there's no doubt. It's open to all people of all ages, but the attraction of it is lifting the expectations of the public of what politics should be about, a thriving democracy that connects with the high expectations of young people who haven't yet been ground under by life.

Along those lines, was it a conscious choice to tap in to some of the musical figures in our country, such as Eddie Vedder, and to get support from Chuck D, Bonnie Raitt and Patti Smith?

All these people have been social justice advocates for years. I was with Bonnie

Raitt and Jackson Brown at the giant anti-nuclear power rallies in Washington and New York in the '70s—100,000 to 250,000 person rallies, and they were right there. Linda Ronstadt and Eddie Vedder have got a lot of social causes. Those are the best types of entertainers, they understand, they're articulate, they're well-grounded in what needs to be done to advance justice and peace in the world.

A lot of the energy that was created in the '60s and '70s, where music sort of led the way, a lot of those folks have grown up and sold out. With what's going on now with all of the young activists, how do you get them to stay involved, to become lifelong activists?

You have to build a lot of civic action groups of all kinds: political, economic, social, neighborhood, housing, cultural. The more institutions you build, the more people will stay with what they're doing as a career. But if all they have are marches or rallies and after they're over all you've got is a lot of debris on the lawn, what's left? There's an old saying that without people, nothing is possible; without institutions, nothing is lasting. And that's what we mean by building democracy. The ACLU advanced civil liberties for 90 years or so, the NAACP advanced civil rights, and those are citizen's groups—non-profit citizen's groups. They've attracted a lot of young lawyers and young organizers along the way because they were institutionally-based and they lasted. Where would we be without those two groups? Did you know that before the ACLU came to be, the US Supreme Court had never issued a decision on free speech based on the First Amendment?

When you talk about change happening at the grassroots level, and you encourage people to get involved, a good example is how in DC in 1998 when 32,000 citizens signed a citizen's ballot initiative on medical marijuana, it passed in every ward in every voter precinct, by I believe 69 percent. Yet Congress, with Clinton's support, and the Justice Department said, "We don't care what you think," and it got shut down.

DC's a colony. People don't have any voting rights in Congress. They can be drafted and go off to war. They pay their taxes. They have all the responsibilities of citi-

zenship and *none* of the rights, other than to vote for the president. The Democrats are for DC statehood. The Republicans are against DC statehood. But *both* parties have done everything possible for many years to make sure that nothing happens as far as DC statehood. That's a good example of where the Democrats say the right thing but do nothing and the Republicans say the wrong thing and do nothing. That happens all the time in Congress.

So are those the kind of things you're talking about when you say there's not a whole lot of difference between Republicans and Democrats? Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas were brought up so often trying to scare people about the Supreme Court and a woman's right to choose, yet the Democrats still allowed them into the Supreme Court. The same goes for Attorney General John Ashcroft, whose nomination the Democrats could have stopped but didn't.

That's right, they could have stopped Ashcroft, and they could have stopped Thomas. Eleven Democrats crossed the aisle and voted for Thomas in the Senate, which was then controlled by the Democrats, and Thomas was confirmed 52 to 48. They *clearly* won for Thomas. And for Scalia? 98 to *nothing*—every Democrat including Senator Gore voted for Scalia. Now when you ask a Democrat why they should be supported in the election, they'll say it's the Supreme Court nominees. And you'll say, "Who don't you like? Who are the worsts?" They'll say the worst are Scalia and Thomas—but they voted them in. That's why you've got to evaluate a party not just on what it proposes, good or bad, but what it fights *vigorously* for. The Democrats flunk in terms of not fighting for what they supposedly are telling millions of Americans they believe in or they are opposed to.

On *Democracy Now*, Cornel West said, "Gore likes to fake left and go right." Is it their tremendous amount of money and how often they show up in America's poor excuse for media outlets that they are able to go on without answering any of the questions that people bring up about how they're all talk and don't produce anything?

Yeah, because the way they campaign is

like there's a force field around them. Gore went *months* without a press conference. They almost never have to answer tough questions because they're not *exposed* to tough questions. Their handlers or advance people have this force field that separates them even from the press that travels with them. The press really can't get at them. And there are ways that these candidates can punish the press if they get

going to make the decisions and they don't want to legitimize that.

I know that when I voted in Virginia, I registered and got information about where I was supposed to vote. I showed up at the address and it was gone. I had to drive around until I found where it was by asking people on the street.

You know also, in a place in Michigan where the Republicans just barely beat the



Campaigns are pretty much farces. They're basically parades in front of people who are expected to watch, but not get involved—to not challenge, to not participate. They're expected just to look at the 30-second ads and go to the polls and vote. That's a pretty anemic democratic policy.

too "uppity," so, these campaigns are pretty much farces. They're basically parades in front of people who are expected to watch, but not get involved—to not challenge, to not participate. They're expected just to look at the 30-second ads and go to the polls and vote. That's a pretty anemic democratic policy.

What do you think is the main reason that people don't vote? What do you think can be done to get them excited about it?

Some people don't vote because they are so overburdened by the tragedies and pressures of life that they don't even think about it. There are other people who miss voting because they tried to get to the voting precinct but they hit traffic. There are all those little things. Take what happened in Florida: they changed the addresses of some of the precincts. People showed up and voting officials said, "Oh you're not here on the rolls, you're down here three miles" but it was almost time for the polls to close. Other people don't vote out of conviction—they say they don't want to participate in a farce, it's tweedledumb and tweedledee, the powers that be are

Democrats for the House of Representatives, the Republicans and the Governor got a bill through the state legislature telling thousands of students at Michigan State in Lansing that they couldn't vote where they lived and go to school; they had to vote where their parents are domiciled, or where their driver's license has them living. So a Republican won because he had all of these students who were showing up at precincts and told "Sorry you can't vote in Lansing." There are all of these little shenanigans like these that are operative. ¶ There's another reason that people don't vote: they're confirmed cynics. The confirmed cynic is the power broker's best friend. Because the cynic is in effect, a person who is so turned off by the corruption of politics and the selling of our government elections to special interests that the rationale is: "I don't want to have anything to do with this mess. Therefore I'm going to withdraw, I'm not gonna participate. I'm gonna pay attention to my private life." Well, that's a vacuum that the rascals fill very rapidly. So the cynic, in effect, is also a masochist, because the cynic is a quitter.

A *skeptical* person is a person who comes to the same conclusion as the cynic, but roars back to try and change it. But the cynic is the dirty politician's *dream*.

What would you say about folks who consider themselves anarchists? They don't believe in supporting electoral politics, yet they're extremely active in issues of social change, whether it be direct action, or volunteer work, or something else.

Anarchism has a heavy philosophical history to it. It's not just a mindless thing. It basically says government will always be taken over by the powers that be and we're not gonna play that game, we're gonna build networks, relationships, lifestyles, and sub-economies in non-governmental areas of society. But you know, sometimes there's a close line between an anarchist and a cynic. You've got to watch the withdrawal symptoms there, because withdrawal is associated with low expectation levels of

Mobil or a nuclear power plant. So when young people come to me and say "I'm not turned on to politics," I say, "Look at the lessons of history. If you don't turn on to politics, politics is gonna turn on you, in a very disagreeable way." You just have to look around the world to document that.

What did you see as some of the shortcomings of your presidential campaign? What are some of the plans to learn from those mistakes and move forward?

Well, we should have started a little earlier. Right from the beginning we should have found neighborhood organizers. I don't think that the Internet gets people to vote, and I don't think that the Internet generates new agenda items—I think it's a cold medium. While it's useful to communicate and instantly disseminate views and press releases, there's no substitute for person-to-person, neighborhood and community mobilization. I would have

believe the national chair is Manning Marable, who supported your campaign.

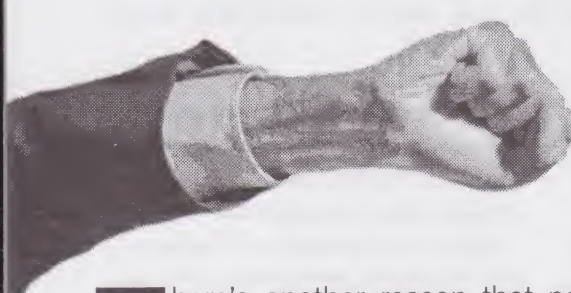
Yeah, well obviously there's no end to the energies that have to be extended. There is a real problem breaking the Democratic Party's grip on a lot of minority activists, and black ministers for example. The NAACP is straight on with the Democratic Party, and that's hard to break. The margin of risk for black people is very tenuous. They don't want to take any chances because they're at a point where their first priority is for things not to get worse. What we wanna try to say to them is, "The best way to make sure that things don't get worse is not to vote for the *least worst*. Vote for someone who wants to make things better than the Democratic Party. Then you would at least have some leverage and they wouldn't take you for granted." They're basically saying to black Americans, "You've got nowhere to go, because we the Democrats are always better than the Republicans."

What about Al Sharpton and the National Action Network? You had a chance to meet with him along with Cornel West in New York right before the election. What are your thoughts if he were to run, or if he were interested in running with you in 2004?

I think he'll run in the Democratic primary. He would get a *huge* amount of publicity, and he'll get on the debates with the primary candidates early—he's very good on debates. Also, it's a *huge* logistical challenge to start a new party, for anybody. This way he could slide in the way Alan Keyes slid into the Republican primaries—he got to be very well known. So if I had to guess, that's what he's gonna do.

I know his notoriety will help a lot. That's why I had a question about Winona LaDuke, who's been very active for a number of years and has done some amazing things. I know she did a tremendous amount considering she has small children that she's caring for. Was that ever a consideration in terms of the amount of time that she would be able to be active on the campaign trail?

Oh yeah. She came to an understanding very early on when she was pregnant that she was going to decide her schedule. She was gonna decide how many trips she was



There's another reason that people don't vote: they're confirmed cynics. The confirmed cynic is the power broker's best friend . . . A *skeptical* person is a person who comes to the same conclusion as the cynic, but roars back to try and change it. But the cynic is the dirty politician's *dream*.

what the powers that be should be held accountable for and what the government should be delivering. We're *always* going to have government and you can't escape the consequences of big business and government anymore. You can't escape pollution, you can't escape the effects on the economy, on and on and on. It's OK if you wanna do your thing in the private sector, but just remember that every time you drop out there's a vacuum. If your neighbor doesn't fill that vacuum with like-minded values, someone else you're not gonna like might fill it—maybe Exxon—

had far more buses go out—vans very well equipped with video fanning out across the country. That way you pick up a lot of new supporters and people who are not going to go to Washington or Berkeley, but people who are in Kansas or Arkansas. That would be really important.

I know you spoke out early on about the DC voting initiative, but I think some people were still critical of the campaign's role in supporting voices from minority communities. Have you heard any comments about that? Are there any plans to build coalitions with groups like the Black Radical Congress? I

going to make and where she was gonna make them. She was nursing an infant, so we just let her do whatever she wanted to do. Once, she stretched herself and got very tired and got a cold, and we were going to the airport together in a cab with her husband and people in her party. I really felt sorry for her. She was nursing a little child—it was just too much.

We're you still happy with your decision of choosing her as your running mate?

Yes, she's an extraordinary person.

If you ran in 2004, would you select her again?

Well, I don't know if she would want to run. It's so early I haven't even decided myself. It's too early to say, but she's done it twice now. Once formally, and then in 1996. She has a lot of other things she wants to do: she's writing, she's moving forward indigenous peoples' rights, she's working on her own White River Reservation, trying to reclaim more land. She's part of the whole Buffalo Prairie resurgence, and she has three children plus a working farm.

With the campaign long over, I think many people are looking at you and saying "What's next?"

Well, we're starting a group called Citizen Works, which is a non-profit, non-partisan group that's going to further these progressive issues and a progressive agenda in the context of finding a lot of people—many of them young people—who will want to receive skills and training in being organizers, communicators, and even running for local office.

Why is that important?

If you ask why it takes *years* and *years* to get national universal health care insurance or renewable energy, you know what it really comes down to? There aren't enough full-time organizers in congressional and in state legislative districts. If we had 1,000 full-time organizers in 1950 in key congressional districts, we would have gotten universal health insurance. Instead, there are now 3,000 *pet* therapists in California alone.

Wow. I heard you saying the other day at the National Press Club that even Nixon put something before Congress for universal

health care, and that he started up the EPA among other things.

It shocks people.

I guess he wasn't *all* bad . . .

It's all relative. [*laughs*] When Nixon put forth these things, they were considered very modest. Now they're, "A program to abolish poverty!?" He was criticized because he didn't go far enough with the minimum income, and there hasn't been a president who's even *discussed* it since. Never mind the size of the minimum-income policy, it's taboo. Compared to today, Nixon's almost looking good.

Do you think he would have sold out American labor the way Clinton/Gore did as far as the WTO or NAFTA?

No, because American labor was a lot stronger and there was a lot more action in the streets. Nixon was more spooked by liberals than Republicans are now. These Republicans now look at liberals like weaklings. Nixon was almost *always* terrified by their power—there was always "the liberal press" and "the liberal congress." He felt like he was surrounded and he adjusted, he responded.

You talked a lot about getting people involved and some of the sources of information to make up for the glaring absence of truth in the major media. Groups like the Independent Media Center have popped up all over the country and so have smaller groups like Public Web Works and Camera One, as well as non-profits that get out marginalized information. Do you think the future lies in the Internet as far as real news getting out?

Well, since television, radio, and cable are controlled by a few giant conglomerates that are standardizing, homogenizing, and laying off a lot of reporters, alternative news sources like Public Web Works is *really* on the cutting edge. Because there are so many web sites, it's good to have all these groups clustered under one brand-named umbrella so that people can turn to it and not be lost in the flurry of fractured web sites. Although there will always be small web sites too. But I think what Stewart Harris and his associate are doing at Public Web Works is really on the frontier

and people will be able to see that materialize very shortly. I think it's gonna excite a lot of young people. There's far more talent among young people than there are permissible transmissions; far more talent for freedom of speech and creativity and real social justice issues than there are programs in the conventional media.

Do you think people will be able to fight off such things as the 1996 Telecommunications Act?

Companies are trying to close in on the Internet too. They're trying to increase the charges; they've already got AOL-Time Warner beginning to dominate. You know something's wrong when they start to raise their access fee, and the others raise it too to *meet* the competition—now *that's* a perverse competition. When you raise your price to meet your competitor's rate, that means you're getting to have a lock. But, the interesting thing about the Internet is that you can fight these people in the very medium that they're trying to control. It's quite different if companies buy the newspaper and television stations in town. How are you gonna fight them when they close you off in reaching your neighbors and friends in the city you live? That's why the Internet has to become forever accessible. The more you have Public Web and those types of networks, the stronger the foothold of the American people will be, to keep the Internet cheap and accessible and reflective of full free speech.

One last question: Who do you think would win in a fight between a man with a big metal wrench and a man with a rusty saw? It's an important question for the people I live with.

Assuming they're both the same size and everything?

Yeah, all things being equal, two individuals, same size.

Is there a right answer to this?

No, it's any answer that you come up with.

You mean a fight to the finish?

That's not defined.

Oh . . . well . . . I'd try and stop them from fighting. ©

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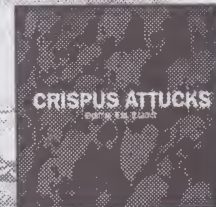
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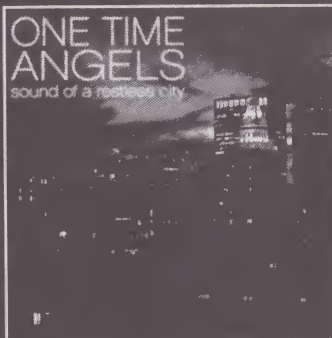
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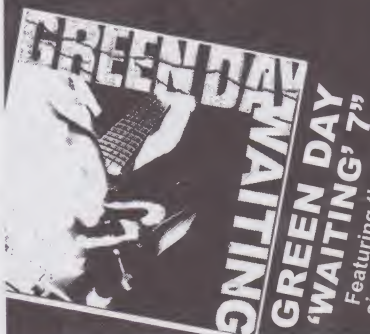
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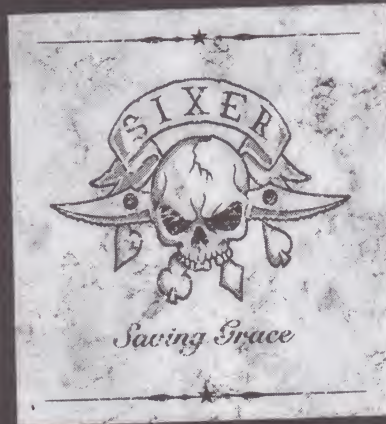
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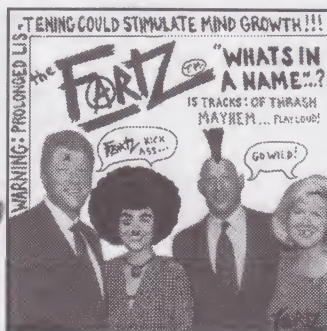
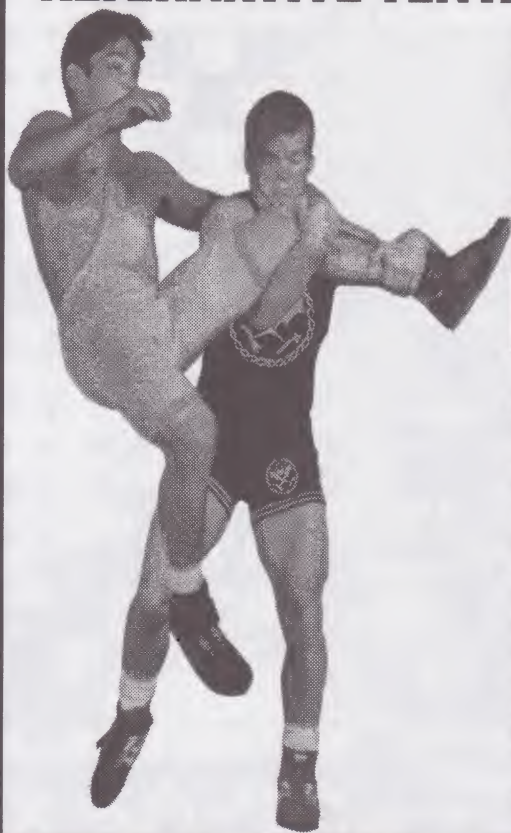
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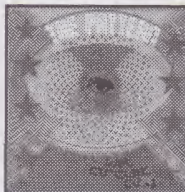


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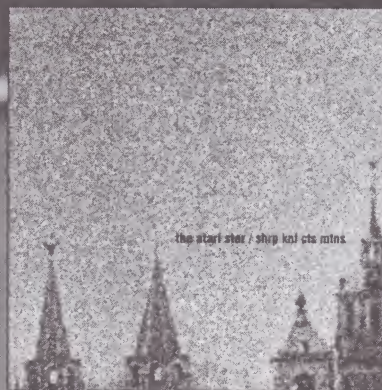
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back to Shatilla

By Ali Abunimah

I am one of those who was there, who was in Palestine. I saw it all with my eyes."

Abu Ismail is sitting on a sofa as he speaks. The tape recorder sits on a low table in front of him, absorbing his voice, and the noise of mopeds and people from the alley outside. He is in his mid-60s, but looks perhaps a little older. We are sitting around the room. There is Umm Ismail, and one of their daughters, two grandsons, myself, some other visitors, and the children of Shatilla refugee camp who have brought me here to listen to Abu Ismail tell the story of the massacre in his village of Safsaf, near Safad, northern Palestine.

Abu Ismail's home is on the third floor of one of the tall, teetering cinder-block structures that make up Shatilla refugee camp. It is on what passes for a main street, a noisy, dusty alley with small shops and crowded with people.

I first went to Shatilla refugee camp last summer. Since then, I have kept in touch with some of the children I met by e-mail. I have come back to visit them for a few days, and they decided they would take me to meet some of the older people who witnessed Al Nakba, the catastrophe of 1948.

Abu Ismail was about 12, and Umm Ismail about 21 when Safsaf was attacked by Zionist forces in October 1948, shortly after the fall of the city of Safad. Safsaf, which had been the headquarters of an Arab Liberation Army battalion, was the first village to fall in the Haganah's operation "Hiram," according to Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains*. Several massacres were committed in the village, details of which Abu Ismail recalls vividly: "On the night of October 29, around five in the afternoon, two planes came and dropped bombs on the village. They destroyed the grain silos and the mill. And so we knew that today Israel would attack us."

Although the village had been heavily fortified, the Arab Liberation Army eventually withdrew, leaving the villagers to fend for themselves. Outgunned and outflanked, the Zionists took the village. Many villagers were killed, or fled to the nearby village of Jish or on to Lebanon. Those who stayed behind gath-

ered in a few storehouses "intending to surrender to the Jews, since we were defenseless," remembers Abu Ismail. "The Jews came into the building. No one moved. 'Get out, get out, get out' they cried—they took out all the men. They closed the door on us. And then we heard shooting. After a while, we opened the door and went outside. There was a line maybe 50 meters, of men—dead. They had lined them up against the wall and shot them with machineguns." The Jewish forces used the dry collecting basin of the village spring as a mass grave. The remaining villagers discovered this a few days later when the water—which unbeknownst to the Jews was piped directly into the village from underground thanks to improvements made by the British—began to taste rotten.

Abu Ismail and Umm Ismail, and a few other survivors, have drawn up a list of 54 names of people killed in that massacre, among them Abu Ismail's father and his older brother, to whom Umm Ismail had first been married.

Perhaps a few days later, recounts Abu Ismail, the Jewish forces told the women and children remaining in the village they had to leave to an adjacent area because there were explosives in the village and they wanted to destroy them.

"Now, there was a woman in one house who was hiding her husband under a blanket. Women were sitting on top of him and around him, so he couldn't be seen. When they were forced out, he was discovered. They took him out, and his wife started screaming. They fired shots near her feet, and then they took the man to Jish, where their headquarters were." There, he was interrogated by the Jewish commander who, learning he was from Safsaf, said, according to Abu Ismail, "I know your village. I used to come to it as a boy with my father, Mordechai, to buy milk." The commander—whose name Abu Ismail remembers as Manu, son of Mordechai, a Palestinian Jew from Safad—sent the man back to Safsaf with the message, "Stay in the village, do not go to Lebanon. We will look after you and I will come to the village in a few hours."

... "People are dying now in Palestine, but they are in the homeland. Aren't houses being demolished on their heads? Let the houses be demolished—the land will remain. If they let us go to Palestine, we would live on the bare ground like the people there. We will resist with them. If we die, may God make it easy on us. If we live, we will continue to resist."...

Abu Ismail said the Jewish commander did come and brought food, but there were only women and children left, terrified and traumatized by the massacres, and unable to fend for themselves. Fearing the worst, they left for Lebanon, either with men who had come back under cover of night to fetch them, or alone to look for surviving men who feared the consequences of returning.

Abu Ismail remembers every inch of Safsaf. As he speaks, his grandson fills in the details with a map he has drawn according to his grandfather's recollection of each house in the village. When asked what he thinks of former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's offer to allow a few thousand Palestinians to return to their homes in Palestine, he scoffs. "They are not serious about the right of return," he says. "They may allow me and my wife to go back, but not my children and my grandchildren."

In contrast to Shatilla, which has been destroyed, rebuilt, and rearranged countless times, Palestinian residents of nearby Bourj Al Barajneh camp are still grouped together according to their village of origin. In "Sheikh Daoud" alley, named after a small village near Akka, we met Umm Waheed.

Umm Waheed named her daughter Badr, meaning "full moon," because that is what she saw in 1948 when she gave birth alone in Sheikh Daoud, to which she had returned after all the inhabitants had left to Yaraka, a neighbouring village. Her family came back to fetch her and then went from village to village as the Zionists advanced, and eventually left for Lebanon.

Asked how she endured this, she says: "I am strong, I am very strong." During the "war of the camps" in the mid 1980s, when Bourj Al Barajneh was besieged by the Amal militia, Umm Waheed helped deliver ammunition to the resistance fighters and baked bread in her house to share with the other residents of the camp. Umm Waheed's home is a single, meticulously kept room with bare concrete floors, that also serves as a small store from which she sells basic supplies, soft drinks, and juice from an electric machine that whirs away near the door so that passersby might be tempted by it.

As she tells how she left Palestine, she begins to sing a quiet song, "Tarakna al buwab mfattaha" (We left the doors open). These are words she has composed herself in order to pass on the history of Palestine to the children in the camp. She remembers that the villagers did not want to leave. "Three times the women and children returned to Majd Al Kuroum"—the last village Umm Waheed stayed in before fleeing to Lebanon—"and three times, the Arab Liberation Army let it fall."

"When we got to Lebanon, they made us live on beaches. Everything was wet and windy in winter. In summer, everything was full of sand. But we endured," remembers Umm Waheed. "After a while, we were given guns, and they said we would do guerrilla operations, but they amounted to nothing. So many of our men were killed for nothing. People are dying now in Palestine, but they are in the homeland. Aren't houses being

demolished on their heads? Let the houses be demolished—the land will remain. If they let us go to Palestine, we would live on the bare ground like the people there. We will resist with them. If we die, may God make it easy on us. If we live, we will continue to resist. We will put a sheet over our heads for shelter. Let them come and burn the sheet and strike us. The land will remain."

Later we accompany Umm Waheed to her son's house, a little way down the alley. There, with members of her family, we watch the new film by Mai Masri, *Dreams of Fears and Hopes*, which documents the friendship that developed over the past two years between children in Shatilla refugee camp and children in Dheisheh refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. Several of those who appear in the film, including Umm Waheed, Mahmoud, 14, Rabie, 15, Ismail, 15, and Safa, 13, are watching the film with us.

There are tears in the room as the screen shows the children's first, and then second—and last—meeting at the border, following Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000. The third time they go back, the children find fortifications which have stopped the meeting of human flesh, embraces, exchanges of laughter, tears, memories and gifts through the barbed wire. But the friendship continues despite all the borders Palestinians find before them: physical borders that separate them, legal and social borders that deny them civil rights, decent education and a chance to work, and, above all, the right to return to their country and their homes.

During my first visit to Shatilla I met Samar, then a young woman of 15. Her strength and eloquence made her a leader and an example for the other children. A few months after my visit she was spirited out of the camp—her family, like so many others, found an escape route out of desperation. Now Samar and her family await the slim possibility of being granted asylum in a European country. They find themselves refugees again, their freedom restricted in every way. Samar writes occasional letters to her friends in Shatilla. They gather to read the latest during my last day in Shatilla. Despite the innumerable and indescribable hardships of life in the camp, Samar has found a place on earth worse than Shatilla: it is to be in double exile, a refugee from her country, and a refugee from the friends she grew up with and who sustained her. In each other, the children of Shatilla have found a hope, strength, and support that the rest of the world has denied them or done its best to destroy.

There is a lot of talk, even a little excitement in Shatilla about the court case in Belgium against Ariel Sharon for the 1982 massacre in this place and a little distance away in Sabra. But people have learned not to put too much hope in anything. Even if the case does go somewhere, what will it mean for the people still here—the ones who, the day after the massacre, got up and continued with life, who endured? Will the world care any more for their futures and rights than it does now? Few here are prepared to say it will. ©

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DUMP THE PUMPS

A 60 year old public works project comes back to haunt the fragile environment of the Mississippi Delta.

By Kari Lydersen

In 1941 the federal government granted authorization to the Army Corps of Engineers to build the Yazoo Backwater Pumps in the Mississippi delta as part of a regional flood control program. The project was sidelined for 60 years by financial, regulatory and practical delays, but now the Corps wants to start the project in 2005.

Moving 14,000 cubic feet of water a second, the pumps would be the largest hydraulic pumps in the world. The Army Corps say the project would protect homes from flooding and aid economic development in the extremely poor, largely African-American area.

But the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Department of Fish and Wildlife Services, and a host of environmental groups including the National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund and the National Wildlife Federation say the pumps would be a huge environmental and logistical disaster, destroying 200,000 acres of endangered wetlands and increasing the use of pesticides in an area that is already contaminated with DDT.

"This project is just outrageous," says Nathalie Walker, the managing attorney at the New Orleans office of the Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund. "This was authorized before we had the system of levees we have there today. Now there is no need for these pumps for flood control. It is not a flood control project, though that's how they're trying to sell it. It's a project for agricultural intensification."

Every year when the Mississippi River floods, it prevents the smaller Yazoo River from emptying into it as it normally would. This creates a backup of water, forming the Yazoo Backwaters just north of Vicksburg, Mississippi. The Corps describes the Yazoo pumps as the last stage in a Mississippi River and Tributaries flood control project started after the massive flood of 1927.

"All the towns along the Mississippi have gotten levees, pumping plants, and other flood control measures," says Army Corps of Engineers public affairs chief Michael Logue. "This is one of the poorest regions of the US, on an Appalachian-type scale. This will give them some economic stability to attract industry and agribusiness and improve their economic prospects."

The 200,000 acres of fragile wetlands the pumps would drain is double the amount of wetlands that are typically destroyed in the whole country in a year. Pump opponents note that this directly contradicts the spirit of President Clinton's Clean Water Action Plan, which calls for the restoration of 100,000 acres of wetlands every year starting in 2005.

"This would have a devastating hydrologic impact on a huge region," says Walker.

As further evidence that agriculture, not flood control, is the point of the project, opponents of the pumps argue that the Corps has provided no evidence that the pumps would save even



one area home from yearly flooding. Logue dodges criticism by pointing out that 1,441 homes, with an average value of \$36,000 each, would be saved from a "100 year flood"—massive floods on the scale of the 1927 disaster which are expected to occur about every 100 years.

A 1976 plan actually called for even bigger pumps, moving 17,000 cubic feet of water a second, but the plan was abandoned by changing legislation which shifted financial burden from the federal to state government. When the proposal was brought up again several years ago, the Corps had to revise it to meet environmental regulations. The revised plan also calls for the reforestation of 62,500 acres of partially cropped wetland, as mitigation for the environmental effects of the pumps. This land would come in easements from local farmers, who would receive subsidies for letting the Corps plant tree seedlings on their land. But the plan obligates the Corps to sell easements for only one year, and it is doubtful even a fraction of the 62,500 acres could be obtained in that time.

A report from the US Fish & Wildlife Service describes the mitigation plan as inaccurate and ill-conceived. It notes that the Corps wants to reforest 62,500 agricultural acres above an elevation of 87 feet—areas that wouldn't be affected by the pumps—but there are only 9,100 agricultural acres above 87 feet in the area.

"A literal interpretation of the Corps's description would indicate that what is proposed is physically impossible to attain," the report says.

The Army Corps already has a poor record of keeping its promises in the area. It still owes the Vicksburg area 28,000 acres of wetlands which it promised to restore in order to gain permission for past construction projects.

"Both the current failure to identify specific mitigation lands in the project area and the current backlog of unmet mitigation for other Corps projects in the Lower Mississippi Basin cast doubt on the entire mitigation process," wrote EPA Regional Director John Hankinson Jr. in a November 3 letter to the Corps expressing the EPA's opposition to the project.

The Corps's "physically impossible" proposal and backlog on restoration is reflective of an overall record of bungling and inefficiency. A recent investigative series in the *Washington Post* described Corps projects as "classic examples of Washington's iron triangle collusion of expansion-minded bureaucracies, pork-minded congressmen and money-minded special interests."

Walker puts it in even simpler terms: "The Corps never abandons a project that's been authorized, no matter how outdated it is. They want to stay busy." Unfortunately, that means that activists and environmental regulators must stay busy as well. ©



HONDURAS: THE OTHER COLOMBIA

Globalization and intensifying political strife in Latin America make the battle for land and survival for the people of Honduras more difficult by the day.

By Kari Lydersen

For years, the El CREM detention center in Trujillo, Honduras was a bastion of terror, a military base with a secret jail 14 kilometers away where political dissidents of Honduran, Nicaraguan, US and other nationalities were tortured and disappeared. The center's official purpose was to train troops from Honduras and El Salvador and commandos from the Nicaraguan Contras. But an internal secret Honduran military document from 1984 which was recently obtained by the Chicago activist group La Voz de los de Abajo (The Voice of Those Below) actually confirms the brutal counterinsurgency mission going on at El CREM. The document also confirms US military support and funding of the program, the existence of the secret jail, with 30 cells, and includes the names of many who were held there and never seen again.

Today, El CREM's reign of terror is over. The spot is now an autonomous community founded by former landless peasants, who for the first time have farmland, a school and community centers to call their own.

The land was supposed to be given to the peasants under agrarian reform passed in Honduras years ago, but in typical fashion in a country that is deemed one of the most corrupt in Latin America, the government refuses to follow through on the reform. The peasants took matters into their own hands with the founding of Guadalupe Carney, the community that now exists on the site of El CREM. It is named after Father James Francis Carney, a Chicago priest who gave up his US citizenship to work in solidarity with the landless peasants, and who disappeared in 1983. It was rumored he was held and tortured at El CREM.

The housing in Guadalupe Carney is all built with palm trees, which are considered sacred plants. The buildings are made with palm wood and fronds, and the palm hearts are eaten. Palm oil also serves various purposes.

"This is the integration of the land and struggle," said Vicky Cervantes, a member of La Voz who has traveled to Honduras several times.

Land takeovers like that at Guadalupe Carney have become relatively common in the past few years.

On June 10, according to a letter from the National Center for Agricultural Workers (CNTC), an organization of women *campesinos*, including many single mothers, made a successful land seizure of 100 *manzanas* of land. The land had been granted to a university by the government to carry out an experimental project, but "the project was never carried out and the land was left uncultivated," according to the letter.

"For that reason, the women peacefully occupied the land," says the letter from Rosalio Murcia Portillo, general secretary of the CNTC. "Conditions for the women are precarious, especially regarding food and housing, and taking into account that they are accompanied by their children."

The takeover occurred in a northern region of Honduras that is known as a battleground between peasants and poor banana workers against the transnational corporations that operate in the area.

"Women have played an extremely important role in taking action to win demands, especially in the struggle for land," says the letter. "They have done this accompanying their partners or alone, seeking for their families a place to work and to make a just income that would help them improve the conditions of their lives."

Two years ago farmers in the El Aguacate area struggled to regain land they say was taken from them for the construction of a 3,000 acre military base used by Honduras and the US. Proof of torture and secret graves—presumably used by the military—were found near the base, and the farmers are now taking the military to court.

While El CREM may be gone and communities like Guadalupe Carney, founded by landless or displaced peasants, have sprouted up around the country, globalization and the intensifying political strife in Latin America have only made the battle for land and survival for the people of Honduras more difficult by the day.

Even before Hurricane Mitch ripped across its Atlantic coast

and sent extreme flooding and violent winds whipping across the small country three years ago, the vast majority of the residents of Honduras lived in abject poverty. Ranked the country with the third poorest population and the third most corrupt government in Latin America by the survey firm Claritas, the hurricane decimated what small amount of agricultural wealth many of the indigenous and poor people of Honduras had. Over 7,000 people were killed in the hurricane, over 12,000 were injured and over two million were displaced—in a country with a population of only about six million.

While President Carlos Flores and his government praises itself for the country's recovery from the hurricane and its handling of agrarian reform, many of the land redistribution and funding promises have yet to be fulfilled, and the military and police continue to come out in force to oppose peasants who try to claim land for themselves, or indigenous people who try to protect their land.

Starting at 4:00 am on June 26, about 2,000 of the 5,000 peasants who live at Guadalupe Carney started occupying the highway leading to the area, demanding that the government follow through on its land reform promises including the allocation of 30 million *lempiras* for improvement on the land and the transfer of the title to the community.

Around noon on June 27, the National Police opened fire on the crowd. Nine *campesinos* were wounded by the gunfire, with two ending up in grave condition. One, Santos Martinez, was shot three times in the chest, the other was shot in the testicles, according to reports from the CNTC. Five policemen were also injured.

While considerable public attention has been given to US support of and involvement in human rights violations and brutal counterinsurgency efforts in Mexico and Colombia, usually under the guise of the war on drugs, US support of the ongoing seizure of indigenous people's land and the persecution of political dissidents in Honduras has received little attention.

The 1984 military document obtained by La Voz is particularly relevant now because it refers to the operations of the notorious Intelligence Battalion run by General Alvarez Martinez. Martinez worked closely with John Negroponte, who was recently nominated by President George W Bush as the US ambassador to the United Nations. Activists say that if Negroponte is confirmed as ambassador, it will allow the US to continue supporting brutal, corrupt and oppressive regimes like those in Honduras and Colombia without international interference.

The document details how the center was currently training 4,000 troops, including 2,400 from two different battalions in El Salvador, 1,000 Nicaraguan Contras and 600 from two battalions in Honduras. 160 US instructors with "competency in irregular warfare" were assigned to the center, and 320 workers were contracted and financed by the US through a private company called PAE for the construction and maintenance of the facility, according to the document, which is actually a report from

Commander Angel Ricardo Luque Portillo to his superior, Commander in Chief Walter Lopez Reyes.

"The joint operations carried on at the center included coordination of intelligence and 'dirty war' activities against civilians and opposition organizations in Honduras," says a letter from La Voz de los de Abajo.

The document lists 20 "suspects" being held for interrogation. The detainees, all of whom were never heard from again, are of Honduran, Nicaraguan and other descent and were captured through surveillance operations run by a joint US, Honduran, and Nicaraguan task force outlined in the document. The document demands "absolute discretion regarding the internal situation, and even more so, regarding financing by the United States of this project."

It also says that, "in view of claims made by some of the leaders of organizations that are a front for the national left, the recent questioning about this center, for example, it is imperative to move the prisoners."

The document also outlines how microwave surveillance by the Honduran national phone company was used to spy on and capture detainees. It orders that the report not be divulged to the

decade, in the past few years multinational hotel and resort companies, as well as Honduran-based companies catering to European and US tourists, have scrambled to buy up attractive coastal land for expensive resorts and hotels.

Much of this land had long been occupied by the Garifuna, Lenca and other indigenous people, whose claims to the land were guaranteed by constitutional provisions relating to indigenous rights. But the government and corporations have used various loopholes to displace or attempt to displace these people.

For example, on November 30, 1998, shortly after Hurricane Mitch, President Flores called a middle of the night Congressional session to repeal Article 107 of the Constitution, the article which had explicitly prevented the sale of indigenous lands. He used the need to bring in money to rebuild after the hurricane as the excuse for opening up the sale of land.

"It is deplorable that the government has taken advantage of the opening provided by the hurricane to reform this article, trying to show the international community that they are very responsible and concerned about the process of national reconstruction," said a statement from the indigenous group CONPAH (La Confederacion de Pueblos Autoctonos de Honduras) issued at the time.

AS IN COLOMBIA, WHILE THE GARIFUNA AND OTHER INDIGENOUS POOR STRUGGLE FOR THEIR VERY LAND AND SURVIVAL, MORE US AID AND FORCES ARE BEING DEPLOYED TO HONDURAS FOR THE SUPPOSED WAR ON DRUGS—CONTINUING THE CYCLE OF DESTRUCTIVE COLONIALISM THAT BEGAN DECADES AGO WHEN UNITED FRUIT COLONIZED HONDURAS AS THE ORIGINAL "BANANA REPUBLIC."



government Superior Council, and outlines plans for preventing information leaks within the military.

"Develop through PROMITEC psychological actions in the zone and among troop personnel to avoid information leaks," it says.

The military document was released to the Honduran media in 1998, according to La Voz members Cervantes and Alexy Lanza, but received little publicity. Now, by publicizing the document in the US, they are hoping to raise awareness of the complicity of the US government with oppression, interrogation, murder and torture in Honduras, and specifically to block Negroponte's appointment as ambassador to the UN.

"His appointment would be a slap in the face to the Honduran people and to all people who care about human rights," says Cervantes.

US political and economic control in Honduras becomes increasingly important to the global market as the tourist trade there grows and the civil conflict in Colombia and other Latin American countries heats up. Neglected by tourism until the last

The Garifuna are just one of the indigenous tribes whose way of life and culture is in danger of being completely wiped out by the sale of their land. They are a community of about 150,000 Black Hondurans with a distinct Caribbean language and culture. They have lived on the Atlantic coast for more than 200 years after arriving there as exiles from Britain—rumors say a slave ship from Africa wrecked and the occupants made their way to Honduras. They lived on the islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines before coming to Honduras.

As in Colombia, while the Garifuna and other indigenous poor struggle for their very land and survival, more US aid and forces are being deployed to Honduras for the supposed war on drugs—continuing the cycle of destructive colonialism that began decades ago when United Fruit colonized Honduras as the original "Banana Republic."

"The Hondurans are still paying the price of environmental and political repression caused by the US over the years," said Cervantes. "This is a cycle we need to stop." ©

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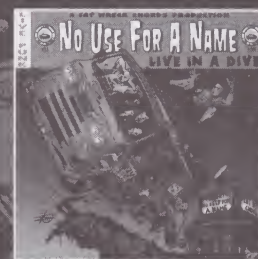
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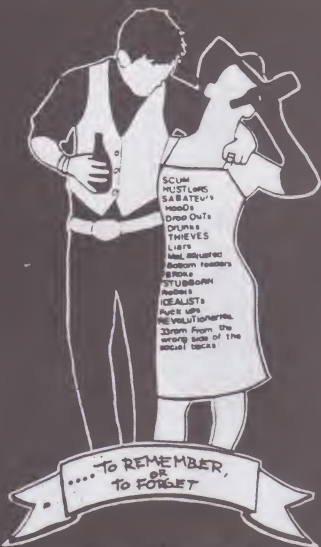
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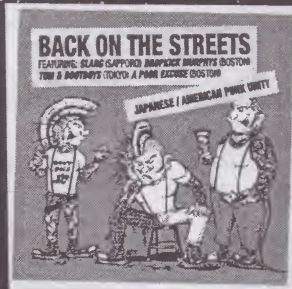
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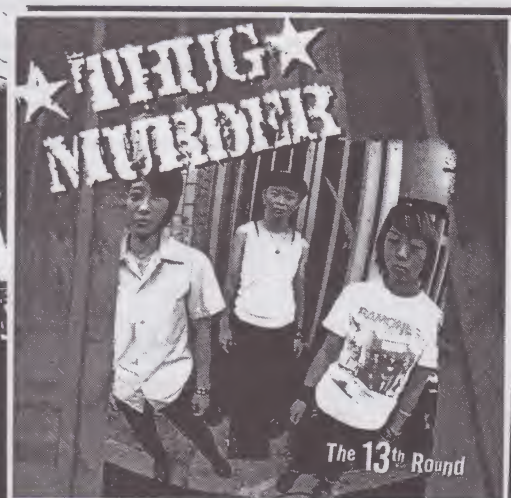


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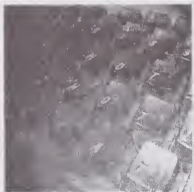
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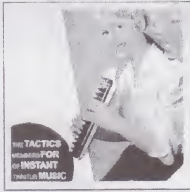
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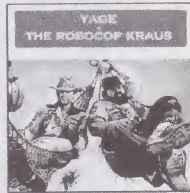
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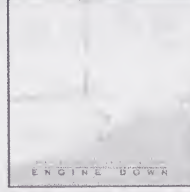
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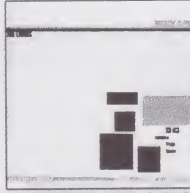
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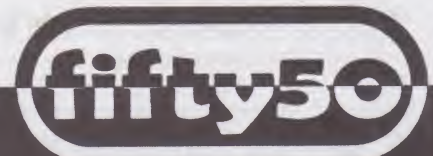
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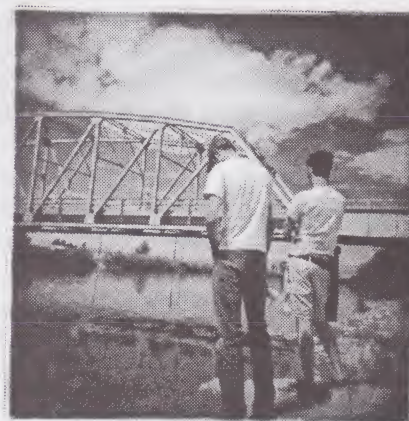
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Dormouse

by Moira Gentry

"You'll get used to it in time," said the Caterpillar."

— Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*

I meant my story to comfort her, but I was so tired. So bloody tired, and they with sharp elbows and harsh voices always jabbing and poking, and how was she to understand? I didn't understand it

myself. The poor child, I thought, who knows what she's been through? There is no kindness here. Have you ever seen a drawing of a muchness? I meant much kindly sleep, a muchness of softness. For a little girl like that, don't we tell stories of princesses? I can't help it that they lived in a well. I tried to sweeten it for her, but I was so sleepy and they kept jabbering away,

their cruelty, their endless fuss and bother to end up in the same place after all.

I'm tired. I'm sick and dizzy with it. Or maybe it's the muchness of mad hands stuffing me in the teapot. This is their idea of a good joke. I don't think it's funny, but I keep my temper. I can see how it would be funny, if it were happening to someone else.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Hello gentle readers. I'm happy to report that in general the fiction submissions have been getting more fiction-y and less rant-y. Rants are great, but they're not fiction, blah, blah, blah—we've been down that road before. Anyway, I think word is getting around and a lot of people are actually reading these pages. Spread the word and tell your friends, punk and otherwise.

A friend (boss, mentor) of mine said something to me this year that I have been thinking a lot about. He said that good writing should be dangerous. I could not agree more. I don't mean "shocking", as in pointlessly offensive or violent—there's nothing dangerous about that. By "dangerous" I also don't mean politically incorrect. And I don't mean dangerous to other people, I mean dangerous to you, the writer.

When I write something and it makes me a little nauseous, that's a good sign. Craft is important, it's good to have a broad vocabulary and to know your way around a paragraph. It's good to be clever and witty. All of these things can be improved on with practice. But it's also good to be willing to make yourself a little bit sick. In fact, it's crucial. I think we take oaths with ourselves and with other people (families, members of our religions and ethnic groups, etc.) that we're not going to reveal certain things. These oaths are unspoken. We don't even know they're there. They just are. The only thing that makes us aware of them, I think, is breaking them. We can do this with fiction or plays or poetry—it doesn't matter. But I think we have to do it in order to write anything that will be worth anyone's time. I say this as a writer. If it's easy and comfortable, it may not be worth much.

As an editor, I say this: I don't give a shit what kind of music you listen to! You don't need to have a punk pedigree to submit to the fiction page! You don't even have to write about anything punk related. If you're punk enough to know this magazine exists, that's enough. Write something dangerous and make yourself sick!

Remember, it's better to submit one story at a time, put your contact info right on the story itself, and be patient. You will hear from me eventually, I promise. Unless I'm really interested in publishing a story, I may not be able to give detailed feedback on it. Please don't take that personally. It just has to do with the number of hours in the day. Send your fiction submissions to fiction@punkplanet.com

I am still (perpetually) looking for submissions for my service industry book, *For Here Or To Go*. For details, check out the GC Press site: gcpress.com and hit the "call for submissions" link. Please follow the guidelines carefully...don't just send any old thing. The focus is pretty specific. And spread the word. —Leah Ryan

They don't listen. She tried to listen but she kept asking questions, she was scared and lonely. How could I explain, when they wouldn't let me finish a sentence? My story speaks for itself. But they would have had to get quiet to hear it. And there is no quiet here. All right, they're mad. It's lead poisoning, fine. It's the weather. Whatever. But they don't listen. They shout and jabber and poke their sharp elbows. My head hurts. We never even get to finish our tea. My bread and butter soaked through. It's not what I want. I want to get my sleep out. When she came I thought she might save me but she was lost herself and scared. She thought if she asked the right questions, she could save herself. Now they're rougher than ever with me. They stare and jabber at her while their elbows and their crow's voices jab me. I'm polite about it, I just want to go to sleep. Where else is there for me to go? I'm not mad. It's just that my head hurts all the time. So they stuff me headfirst into the teapot. I'd be glad to stay here, I don't complain. It's dark and quiet. Only I can't breathe. I'm drowning in tea. What I wouldn't give for a nice green vegetable. Or a few seeds, sun-

flower or caraway. Or some sunlight. I can't breathe and I'm drowning in black China tea. Let me out of here. When will it end? This is a big table, set for multitudes. We'll never run out of places. Just keep going around in this damned endless bloody circle. And where will we end up? Back where we started, that's where, and nothing ever changes.

They're shouting, I can hear them. It hurts my head. I'm sleepy. I can't get my sleep out and I get confused. How can I save her? And the dizziness and nausea.

They rest their sharp elbows on me. They force me awake to tell a story they won't let me finish. They don't listen. Their mocking laughter poisons my dreams. Then they demand civility, I hear them at it. As it turns out, "I breathe when I sleep" is the same as "I sleep when I breathe." I can't breathe. Let me out of here. I can't wake up. What is there for me to wake up to? Babies turn into pigs here. It was the best butter. They pour hot tea on my nose. Why shouldn't I sleep my life away?

I get caught in these loops, little loops inside the larger. I sing a song for her, out of my dreams. I fly through stars, so many I can't count them. I am a beam of light, a

path to god. I am constant motion, and the stars rush and twinkle by in this immensity of darkness, this endless quiet. I try to sing it to her but I forget the words. Then they pinch me with their dirty fingernails and I am lost again, in this murderous broken world. Off with her head! The time is always the same, only the year is different. I wake up and it's always teatime. It seems that the last time I was awake, I was a new dormouse, brand new and full of hope. Now my whiskers are grey. Now I just want to sleep. I can't face it. How will she get home? Somewhere green, and sunny. It was the best butter. My head hurts. It was a treacle well.

I had hardly begun my story and they questioned me, corrected me, silenced me. I'll sleep forever. Dream about things that begin with an M. Moon and Mousetraps. And Memory, and Muchness. Have you ever seen a drawing of a muchness? It's my story, and I'm sticking to it. A sticky story, it ends in a different place than it began. I'll get us out of here. It'll just take a long time. A long time. ©

Moirra Gentry is a locksmith and security alarm installation instructor in New York City. She lives with her two cats, Bruce and Richard, and more books than any single human being should be allowed to own.

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the DIY files

Selling Yard Sale Junk Online

An insider's secrets revealed

By Richard Melchior

Tired of the drudgery of working 40 hours a week? Tyrannical boss got you down? Or maybe you just want a little extra spending money. I'm sure many of you have heard stories about savvy entrepreneurs who make a killing selling yard sale finds on online auctions. With this handy guide you can learn the proven methods of a real life Ebay tycoon and leave behind menial wage slavery for a life of empowerment, free enterprise at its most free, and the quest for junk. Or at least you can make a few extra dollars selling old stuff.

Where to Look

The first thing is where to begin. The best source that I've found for accumulating good, sellable junk (antiques, collectibles, usable items, etc.) is the yard sale or garage sale. I've lived in several different cities and towns and haven't found one yet that doesn't have at least some yard sales during the summer months and a corresponding subculture of "pickers" (the people who frequent such sales hoping to score good stuff). I've found that moderately large cities and college towns are the best sources for the kinds of things I like to buy. Smaller towns tend to have fewer sales and you usually won't find the same variety of items as you will in a town with a larger and more transient population. Check the classified section of your local paper for garage sale listings. In most places, sales are held primarily on Fridays and Saturdays.

In order to go to yard sales, the main thing you need is a car. I prefer minivans or smaller wagons, but anything will do as long as it runs and has room to haul things. Also, you will have to do a lot of driving so a car that gets decent gas mileage will save money.

A good map of the city or town you live in is also essential. Even if you've lived in a city for years there will probably be sales on streets that you're unfamiliar with. You can also use the website Mapquest (mapquest.com) to get a map and/or directions to specific addresses.

If you have a hard time getting up early, tend to oversleep, or sleep through alarms, then *this is not the occupation for you.*

The good stuff goes fast at yard sales, often before the sale "officially" starts. You should try to get to as many as possible before the actual listed starting time of the sale, most people will let you in early and are often fully set up and ready to sell well before the listed time of the sale. Sometimes people will tell you that they are not ready and ask you to come back later but they're usually nice about it (but not always).

Beware of the other people going to yard sales. Innocent looking old ladies can be downright ferocious. Yard sale pickers are highly competitive and aggressive and if you pick something up and put it back down again, you may find it gone before you know it. A good thing to do is grab items you think you may want to buy and then look them over carefully before checking out—you can always put them back down again.

Thrift stores and flea markets can also be good sources for finding things to sell online. I've not had much luck with thrift stores over the years, but occasionally I find something that I can re-sell. Try to get to thrift stores when they open or soon thereafter because, like yard sales, the good stuff doesn't last. I've also found interesting, sellable items at flea markets. At flea markets the overall quality of goods is usually higher than at yard sales, but the prices are considerably higher also.

What to Buy

Now that you know where to buy for resale, the next question is *what* to buy. People buy and collect a huge range of items so there is no one answer to that question except try to buy things you think you can make money on. I would start by researching collectible areas that are of interest to you. If you are interested in music, you might want to look into which records and CDs are valuable to collectors. If you're interested in video games, start researching which games and game systems are most desirable. Depending on how old you are, the toys you played with as a kid may already have collector value. I have a friend who likes vintage clothes and jewelry and has just started selling off her surplus.

There are plenty of resources available to aid you in your

research. Go to a bookstore that has a good section on antiques and collectibles and you can find books there on everything from '50s Bakelite jewelry to Barbie dolls to vintage denim to action figures. You can also research items online via Ebay or other auction sites. Ebay retains a list of items that have sold in the past 30 days so you can look up items and see what prices they brought. You might also want to start going to flea markets and/or auctions in your area and simply look around and see what dealers are asking for items and what prices various items bring at auction. The key thing is to try to learn as much as possible, as the more you educate yourself, the more you'll be aware of a good deal when you see it.

With the above information as a rough introduction, here are some basic things to keep in mind: With most items, condition is of great importance. Something in unused/mint condition may be worth a considerable amount of money, but the same item with even moderate wear can be worth very little. With glass and pottery look for chips, cracks, and repairs because these can significantly devalue the item. With electrical or electronic goods, ask to try them out before buying them; people will swear on their mother's grave that something works and when you get it home you find that it doesn't. Many newer items may also have resale value. If you know something was expensive new—such as a pair of Doc Marten's—and you are able to buy it cheaply, you may be able to still make money on it. Conversely, just because something is old doesn't mean it has value.

Selling Online

In order to sell online the main things you will need are a computer with Internet access and a digital camera for photographing the items you wish to sell. Having photographs of items is really crucial because many people will not spend money on something without being able to see what it is they are buying. If you don't have a digital camera and can't afford one, you can use a conventional camera and a scanner (which are really cheap these days) but this can be a cumbersome process and you're con-

stantly paying for film and processing costs.

I use ebay (ebay.com) for most of my online auctions. *Everyone* knows about ebay and it is the best place that I've found to attract the largest number of potential bidders. I've been using Ebay for over four years and have good success with the site. There are also many other auction sites as well as places for posting classified ads online, so check around to find what you think will work best for you.

Most auction sites, since they are driven by people listing their items online, make it very simple for you to list your items on their site. So simple in fact, that it's easier for you to just go there and read their instructions than for me to reproduce them here. However, there are a couple things to keep in mind when creating your listing. When listing on ebay or other sites try to find out exactly what you have and be as specific as possible when putting an item for sale. For example, listing a "Fire King jadeite mixing bowl" by name will attract many more of the bidders who are interested in such a thing than simply listing it as a "green bowl". If you are concerned about not getting the amount of money you want for something, many auction sites allow you to put a *reserve* on the item whereby it won't sell until the bidding meets or surpasses your reserve. For example, if I put a \$50 reserve on a Misfits record it would not actually sell to the high bidder unless the bidding met or went beyond my \$50 reserve.

Are you going to get rich doing this? I haven't. I've barely managed to get by. But I don't have to give 40 hours of my week to someone else. I like to think of what I'm doing as creative recycling in that I'm buying used items that are no longer wanted and reselling them to people who value them. Hopefully in some small way I've reduced the amount of things that are disposed of (I've actually pulled things out of the trash and resold them). In addition, I've found amazing things over the years from vintage music gear to valuable antiques to weirdo stuff I never knew existed. And that's the really fun part about doing this, there's the possibility of finding literally anything! ☺

early to bed

by Sex Lady Sarah

SEX
Y
A

Some of you may recall that last issue I answered a question from a boy whose girlfriend wanted to have sex with other people. I said he should figure out why it bothered him and talk to her. By talking, I hoped that maybe he would understand his fears better and be more comfortable with her sleeping with other people or perhaps she would see that this bothered him so much and agree to keep their relationship exclusive. I also said he could break up with her because if she really wanted to fuck someone else, well, chances are she would probably do it eventually anyway. I ended that answer by extolling the virtues of open relationships.

I wrote that answer as a person in a *theoretically* open relationship. I have been with my girlfriend for over two and a half years and we have always thought of it as an open relationship, but in that time neither one of us had ever had sex outside our relationship (OK, I kissed that guy at that party and that other guy that other time, but that doesn't really count 'cause it was just kissing and she was there and I was drunk). But three days before that column went to the printer, I found out that it was no longer just theoretically open—it was *really* open.

My honey had fucked another and I was devastated and much more freaked out than I ever thought I would be. In fact, she had earlier told me she had a crush on this guy and I encouraged her to go for it! I thought I was secure enough not to feel threatened by this silly boy. Plus, I thought that if she screwed him and told me all about it, I would think it was sexy and titillating. I had this relatively common fantasy of

watching her have sex with another person, but I guess I never separated the idea of watching her have sex with someone and hearing about how she fucked him after the fact. I felt left out, I felt rejected, I felt hurt, sad, ugly, and jealous; jealous both that some guy fucked my girlfriend and that I hadn't gotten any in a while (this is probably a good time to mention that my baby usually lives 2,000 miles away and this happened a week before she was supposed to come home for an extended stay). I also had a bit of performance anxiety—could I measure up to this stud in the sack? Was she looking for something that I'm lacking because I'm not a boy? These were all emotions I hadn't felt since I've been with her.

The one thing I *couldn't* feel was betrayed because she didn't cheat on me, and that made a huge difference. Betrayal and cheating are ugly, horrible things and by setting up our relationship as open, we reduced the possibility of betrayal significantly. Granted, in the heat of the moment I would have loved to spit out "you betrayed me, you filthy whore!" at her. It would have been a lot more dramatic than "oh, really?" which was all I felt I could say at the time. Hell, if she had asked me what I thought the night before she did it, I would have said "Great! Screw him, be safe, have fun and tell me all about it in the morning." I want this kind of relationship, I just don't think either one of us was prepared for it to *actually* happen.

When I met my girlfriend—let's call her "Lucy"—I had a pretty limited sexual experience and most of it was with boys (well, more like a boy). I hadn't really had sex in a very long time before we got together and when we started fucking, it was like this sexual beast awoke in me. All of the sudden I felt sexy in a way I hadn't before. As a fat chick, I had felt sexually marginalized for a long time. As much as I tried to fight it, I bought into a lot of the cultural norm about fat girls not being hot. I didn't think I could be sexy, so I didn't feel or act sexy and therefore no one thought I was sexy (or at least no one let me know they thought I was). Even as I fell in love with Lucy and decided that I wanted to be with her forever, I knew that I didn't want her to be my last sex partner—hell, I was just getting started! I knew she never wanted a monogamous sexual relationship, because she told me so the first time we talked.

The place where we screwed up is that we never really *talked* about having an open relationship or the reasons why we wanted to, we just assumed that when either of us were in a position to get a little on the side that we would and it would be cool.

We didn't talk about boundaries and logistics and that was a mistake. To have a healthy open relationship, we have to communicate the things that we want to be ours as a couple. Without any boundaries, how did I know that she wasn't going to call him baby, fuck him the same way she fucked me (I know, impossible, but still . . .) hold his hand in public, or start sleeping at his house every night? I realized that so much of my anxiety, hurt and anger were stemming from the fact that for the first time in our relationship, I felt insecure. And I felt jealous and I *hate* feeling jealous. I felt possessive of her body and knew that that was wrong. She owns her body just as I own mine, but when I found out this guy had his dick in her, I wanted to tie her down and claim her as my own. But I couldn't do that to her—you can't control other people's lives like that and I know that.

I was also grappling with the feeling that I was being ridiculous. She was coming here in a few days to live with me for six months. She told me over and over again how much she loved me and that this was just this fun thing she did and that she had no idea it would be so hard for me. And I had to believe her because you know what, if I had had the chance to fuck some hottie that same night, I would have done it and I would know that it didn't mean I loved my baby any less.

So now it's a few weeks later. The first night she was here, I was angry, I was hurt, and I think she was angry too. This is what *we* both wanted—why couldn't I deal with it? So we talked, and we cried. Then we talked about things that we had never talked about before: her need to control her own body and my need to know that I can be sexual with people besides her; the fact that she taught me how to be sexy and the fact that I taught her how to be in a relationship; the fact that, if we are going to spend most of our lives apart we may sometimes need another body to take the edge off the loneliness. We talked a lot about both of our overwhelming desire to make this relationship work and about how we can be totally in love with one another and at the same time open to sharing sexual experiences with other people. Equally as important as all that, we talked about the fact that it is *OK* for this to be hard, that anything worth having takes some work. We've talked a lot about "him," and more about "us."

But that's not to say this is all worked out yet. I still torture myself trying to imagine exactly what they did together,

especially when I've had a drink or three. I guess part of me thinks that if I could just see what happened, I could convince myself that he's no match for me in the lust-making department. I guess I also want to make sure that they didn't connect the same way that we do when we're, you know . . . There are times when we are having sex that I feel so incredibly emotionally in synch with her, and I want to know that she didn't go there with him. Lucy has been great, though. She has answered every question that I asked her honestly and without protest, no matter how nitty or gritty the question. Her answers have assuaged many of my fears. But I know more questions will still come up. The important thing is knowing that I can ask her anything and expect an honest answer in return.

It has also been hard because this boy is a friend of hers, someone she used to talk about all the time. Someone who had become a part of her life away from me, and now I think she feels she can't mention his name. While there is part of me that doesn't want to hear about him, I also know that to make this work, to make this normal, I have to be OK hearing about that funny thing he said, or how he thinks I look like Peppermint Patty. OK, sure I don't really want to hear about how cozy his bed is or what a sexy ass he has, but I hate the idea that I am shutting myself out of Lucy's life by being uncomfortable hearing her talk about him. What is so crazy is that because I know she's trying not to mention him, I get suspicious that she is e-mailing him or talking to him and not telling me because she doesn't want me to know. The reality is she's just trying not to upset me. But *what* a vicious cycle! The less she talks about him, the more I think she's hiding something and the more she thinks she is protecting me from further pain.

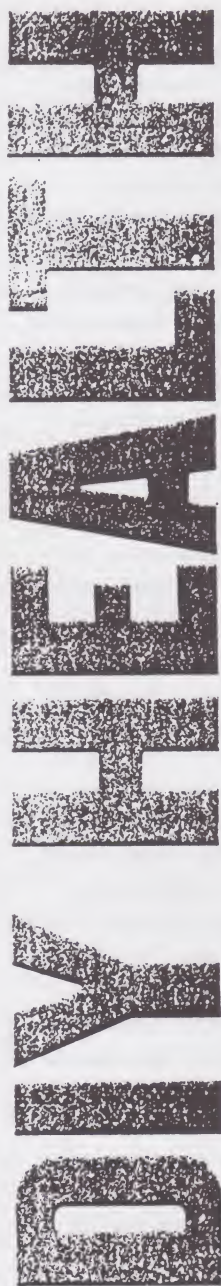
So what are we doing now? We are spending a lot of time together doing things that make us happy. We are talking a lot about everything. We are reading books about open relationships (*The Ethical Slut* and *Lesbian Polyamory* are required reading on this subject), looking for a little guidance to make this work, and I personally am trying to practice what I preach. I have talked the talk and now I am learning to walk the walk. Wish me luck! ☺

Hey you kids—don't forget to send in your questions! I'll get back to answering them in the next issue. E-mail to: diysex@punkplanet.com

in sickness and no wealth

Smoking Facts

by Angel Page



Just recently, I have been inspired to write about the effects of smoking and the steps to quit, and I owe it all to my stepmother, Michele Godlewski. She decided it was time to quit, and she did it! Everyday is a battle of temptation, but she makes it through, and takes one day at a time. Congratulations Michele! Keep up the hard work! Another great inspiration is "The Truth", it's a collective that has a great web-site (please check it out: www.thetruth.com) chock full of information on smoking. Their mission statements says: "The Truth is dedicated to exposing the truth about tobacco so that people can have all the information necessary to make up their own minds for themselves." That pretty much sets up the tone of this issue's column.

What Effects Smoking has on the Body

Hair Loss: Smoking weakens the immune system, leaving the body more vulnerable to disease such as erythematosis, which can cause hair loss, ulcerations in the mouth, and rashes on the face, scalp and hands.

Eye Problems: Smoking is believed to cause or worsen several eye conditions. Those who smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day are twice as likely to develop cataracts, a clouding of the eye's lens that blocks light and may lead to blindness.

Wrinkles: Smoking prematurely ages skin by wearing away proteins that give it its elasticity, depleting it of vitamin A, and restricting blood flow. In one study, smokers in their 40s had facial wrinkles similar to those of non-smokers 20 years older.

Hearing Problems: Because smoking creates plaque on blood vessel walls which decreases blood flow to the inner ear, smokers can lose their hearing earlier than non-smokers (up to 16 years sooner, according to one study), and are more susceptible to hearing loss caused by ear infections or loud noise.

Skin Cancer: Smoking does not cause *melanoma*, a sometimes deadly form of skin cancer, but it does increase your chances of dying from it. This may be because smoking impairs the immune system.

Smokers also have a 50 percent greater risk of contracting *squamous cell carcinoma*, a cancer that leaves scaly, reddish eruptions on the skin.

Tooth decay: Smokers are one and a half times more likely to lose their teeth.

Osteoporosis and Back Problems: Carbon monoxide, the main poisonous gas in car exhaust fumes, and cigarette smoke binds to blood much more readily than oxygen, cutting the oxygen carrying power. Heavy smoker's bones lose density, and take up to 80 percent longer to heal. Those who smoke more than one pack per day are more susceptible to back problems. One study shows that industrial workers who smoke are five times as likely to experience back pain after surgery.

Stomach ulcers: Smoking decreases resistance to the bacteria that causes stomach ulcers. It also impairs the stomach's ability to neutralize acid after a meal, leaving the acid to eat away at the stomach lining. Ulcers in smokers are harder to treat and more likely to reoccur.

Cervical Cancer: Besides increasing the risk of cervical and uterine cancer, smoking can create fertility problems for women and complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Smoking also lowers estrogen levels, speeding up menopause.

Deformed Sperm and Impotence: Smoking can deform sperm and damage its DNA, causing miscarriage or birth defects. In fact, men who smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day have an extra 42 percent chance of fathering a child who contracts cancer. Smoking also diminishes sperm count and reduces the blood flow to the penis, sometimes causing impotence. One study of 20 impotent heavy smokers found that after quitting for just six weeks, seven men were able to have erections again.

Buerger's Disease: Smoking can damage blood vessels walls, making it difficult for the heart to pump blood to the extremities. In serious cases, Buerger's Disease can lead to gangrene, the death of body tissue, and even the amputation of a limb.

Cancer: In addition to lung cancer, smoking is also linked to nose, tongue, mouth, salivary gland, pharynx, throat, esophagus, kidneys, penis, pancreas, anus, breast, cervical, and uterine cancer.

Incontinence: In one study of 600 women, the results indicated that former smokers are twice as likely to develop incontinence than women who never smoked are.

PLEASE NOTE: I am not a Doctor or Licensed Herbalist, so please use the recipes, advice and other information here at your own risk. If you are nursing or pregnant, do not use any herbs or supplements without supervision from your midwife, herbalist or doctor.

Chewing Tobacco—No Alternative

Some people say that smokeless tobacco is less harmful than smoking it. They are incorrect! People as young as 19 have died of cancer from using chew! Spit tobacco contains high concentrations of cancer-causing chemicals called *nitrosamines*, plus at least a half dozen other chemicals that cause cancer. Did you know that one "dip" of smokeless tobacco delivers as much nicotine as several cigarettes? People who chew will experience cracked lips, bleeding gums, stained teeth from the tobacco juice, leaving your teeth yellow, maybe brown, or worse yet, *black!* Yuck! Soon these will teeth develop cavities and the gums that hold them recede or become diseased. This is nothing compared to the risk they are at from developing *leukoplakia*, a disease characterized by white, wrinkled, thickened patches in the places in the mouth where tobacco is held. Leukoplakia cases often become cancer cases.

More than 9,000 people die every year from oral cancers. Gum, cheek, and tongue cancers are painful and unsightly. When the cancer has spread into the throat, jaw and esophagus, surgery and radiation become necessary, often leaving the user's face disfigured because of the removal of tissue, skin and bone that make the face what it is. If the cancer has spread to other parts of the body, survival can become less likely. After expensive, often painful treatments, dying from cancer is still a tragic reality every year for thousands of chew users.

The Dangers of Smoking Cigars

- Cigars contain nicotine and cancer-causing chemical just like cigarettes.
- Cigar smokers have four to ten times the risk of dying from larynx and esophageal cancers as compared with non-smokers.
- One cigar is equivalent to a whole pack of cigarettes.
- Cigar smoking is not a safe alternative to cigarettes, it is just as or more dangerous than smoking. Cigars contain nicotine and cancer-causing chemicals just like cigarettes. They also do not have filters to reduce tar and nicotine.

Interesting Tidbits, Stats and Facts:

- Smoking kills over 400,000 people a year, more than one in six people in the United States, making it more lethal than AIDS, automobile accidents, homicides, suicides, drug overdoses, and fires combined! That's the same as three fully loaded jumbo jets crashing each day with no survivors!
- 87 percent of all lung cancer cases are caused from smoking. What's worse, the disease is often symptomless in the early stages. Thus, when the disease is discovered, it's often so far

advanced that a cure is impossible.

- Smokers die on average six to eight years younger than non-smokers do.
- After 15 years off cigarettes, the risk of death for ex-smokers returns to nearly the level of people who have never smoked.
- A higher proportion of smoking-related cancer deaths occurs among men than among women.
- Among women, lung cancer has surpassed breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer deaths.
- Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death and disease.
- Smokers in their 30s and 40s have a heart attack rate that is five times higher than their non-smoking peers.
- After surgery for lung cancer, almost half of the smokers will resume smoking. Even when these smokers have their larynx removed, 40 percent try smoking again.
- From the time you start smoking cigarettes, on average you have 30 years until you get a smoking-related disease.
- Smoking related cardiovascular disease kills more than 600,000 people each year.
- Each day 6,000 young people will take their first puff on a cigarette and 3,000 will become regular smokers. That's more than a million smokers each year. One out of three of them will die from a disease caused by their smoking. Unless we do something to stop this trend, 5 million young people who are alive today will die from using tobacco products.
- Nearly 12.5 million acres of forest (the size of more than 10 Grand Canyons) are destroyed each year to provide trees to cure tobacco. That's about a tree every two weeks for the average smoker.

• • •

The next issue of *Punk Planet* will have smoking cessation tips on how to quit and stay that way. ©

Please feel free to send suggestions/complaints/whatever to me! Drop an e-mail to: makotorecordings@yahoo.com. Rather send real mail? Mail to: Makoto Recordings, PO BOX 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005. Thank you!

Sources:

Pamphlet by Tara Leonard
American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
Michigan Department of Community Health
The American Legacy
The Truth: www.thetruth.com



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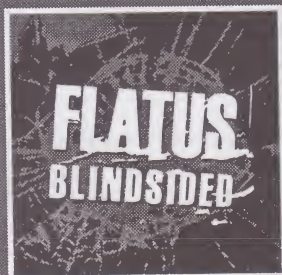
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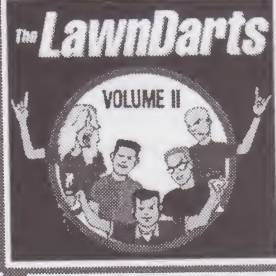
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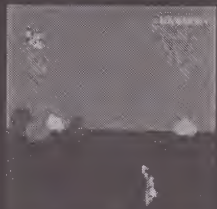


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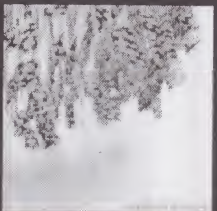
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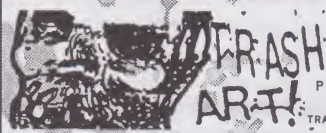
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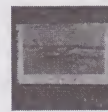
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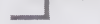
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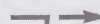
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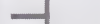


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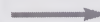
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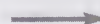


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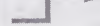
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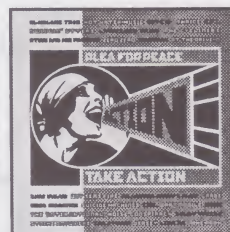
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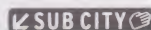
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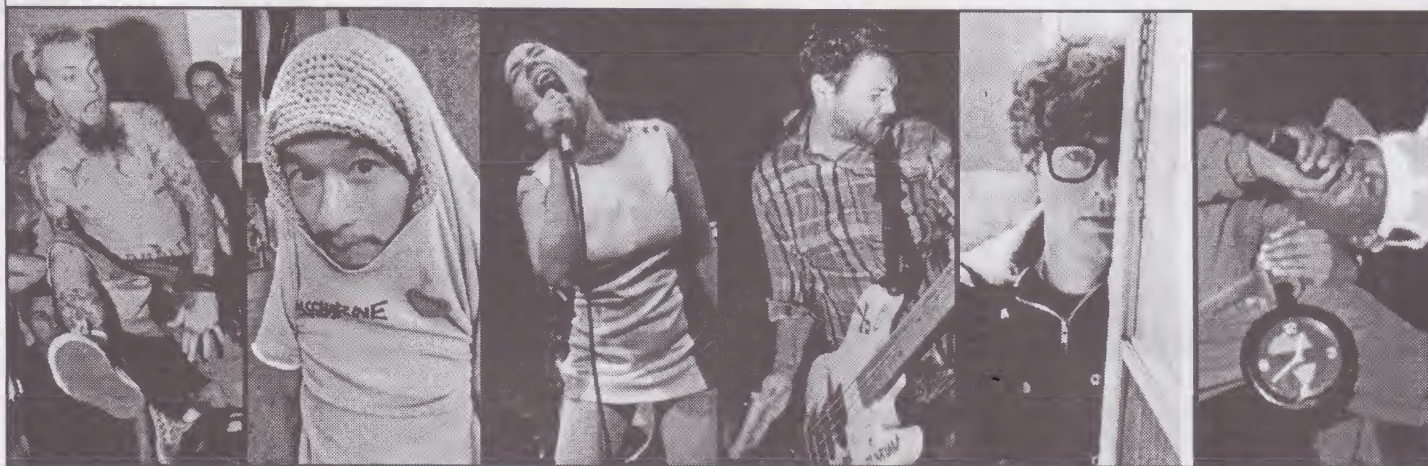
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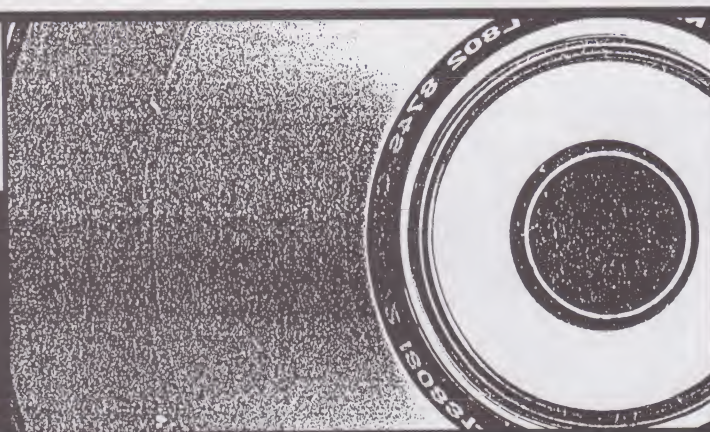
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PLASTIC MUSIC



Abilene - S/T, CDEP Rarely is it a good sign when nary a song clocks in under four minutes and two go longer than eight minutes. Slow, straight-forward rock with long, elaborate buildups to endless musical plateaus. Not bad (like Hoover and the Shipping News), but the pacing can be too much. (KR)

Slowdime Records, PO Box 414, Arlington, VA 22210

Adult Rodeo - Long-range, Rapid-fire, CD Well played, executed, produced, quirky alt pop without any punk rock influence musically. At 17 songs in 46 minutes, it became kinda lengthy. (AS)

Four States Fair, 1300 Summit St., Austin, TX 78741

Against Me - Crime, 7" Musically basic with lots and lots of up-picking (almost reggaeish) in the verses, this record sort of reminds me of Op Ivy. Mid-tempo rock with shouted vocals that doesn't do much for me. (KR)

Sabot Records, POB. 28, Gainesville, FL 32602 and Plan-It-X Records, 5810 Willis Rd., Georgetown, IN 47122-9117

Age Of Ruin - Black Sands Of The Hourglass, CD This is an interesting dross of metal with some HC breakdowns. If you dig the vocal gargle with some moving and grooving metal without all the silly guitar solos, this could be worth checking out. Maybe Kerrang! Would have better feedback about Age Of Ruin. (DM)

Dark Moon Empire, www.darkmoonempire.com

All the Quiet - S/T, CDEP You know it's never a good sign when the shortest song on a CD is five minutes, and two tracks go over 11. Meticulously paced (i.e., usually slow) and dreamy with minimal vocals (in this case, that's good), this reminds me of Joan of Arc. (KR)

Hope Records, PO Box 71154, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

♫ Allergic To Whores - Shadows In The Killing Field, CD This is the best thing to listen to if you crave fast, aggro music with some melody. If you miss the days (or only heard the rumors) when bands like DRI (the early years), Flag Of Democracy, Crumbsuckers, AOD (early years), Jerry's Kids or even Napalm Death (VERY early years) played punk at break neck speeds with all sorts of attitude. These guys have that pissed off shout to the vocals, crunchy guitars, grooving bass lines and a drummer that beats the hell out of his kit. All this and having catchy as fuck riffs and break downs, you can't go wrong. This is punk rock done right in a style that's just not respected or done any more (Yes, I know

about Spazz, so shut up.). (DM) Sound Pollution, PO Box 17742 Covington, KY 41017

American Nightmare - S/T, MCD Ex members of Ten Yard Fight are still playing the hardcore game. Mixing up Boston old school with the new breed, American Nightmare play some great music. Fast tempos with pissed-as-all-hell vocals and there are enough mosh breakdowns to keep the pit jocks happy. (SY)

Bridge Nine Records PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199

American Steel - Jagged Thoughts, CD This band had a very eclectic style, they incorporated a 60's soul feel with a Caribbean flavor in some songs. Their songs were relaxed with mid tempo a nice beat and kind of poetic, some were reminiscent of Elvis Costello. (AA)

Lookout Records 3264 Adeline Street, Berkeley Ca 94703

The Anchormen - Punk Rock Is Awesome, CD Nerd Rock in a way that I didn't think was possible after the Dead Milkmen had cornered that market. Or: Music I'll never get laid to. You decide... (DM)

Unstoppable Records, PO Box 441915 Somerville, MA 02144-0006

Antiseen - The Boys from Brutalsville, CD Heavily Southern straight-ahead rock about beer drinkin', truck drivin' & kickin' some ass. Occasionally punk, it's mostly bad—but it is dedicated to the memory of Dale Earnhardt Senior. How cute. (KR)

TKO Records, 4104 24th St., #103, San Francisco, CA 94114

♫ Asschapel - Total Worship, CD The name of the year award goes to these guys. Pure crust excellence, with a pinch of grind for good measure. A tad too metal at times and the moog is overused, but this is generally a great CD. Don't we all need to sit back and reflect on how amusing murder and mayhem are from time to time? The light-hearted lyrics for the song "Let's Kill," for example, implore us listeners to free ourselves and join in on the band's already discovered pleasures of violence: "now I know how good it feels to get revenge so let's fucking kill anything and everyone let's fucking kill." Profound, no? Or how bout these comedic lines from another hit song: "the children sing before they kill they swallow the milk to swallow the pills step back take the fall take it back take it all it is right in front of your eyes that is right it is your demise." Forget goofing around with shiftless mainstream crap like GWAR. This band might not throw fake blood on you, but

About our new review section: We still review all the records we receive, but we only give longform reviews to records our review staff decides they want to highlight. Those reviews are marked with an ear icon, which signifies that they deserved another listen... or something like that. That doesn't mean the ones that get short reviews aren't worthy, just that the reviewer decided that they could write about another record better. That also doesn't mean that all the ear-marked reviews are positive, just that a reviewer had something to say about them. Also, we now give each reviewer a "spotlight" section, where they can write about an old album they really liked and write about what they're currently listening to, which should give you, the reader, a better feel for what that reviewer's got going on—which in turn allows you to make a more informed decision about whether or not you agree with said reviewer. Finally, If a reviewer doesn't like your record, that doesn't mean that it's totally terrible or anything like that. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congratulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

their growling crusty vocals have a much higher stainability quotient than that of any material substance. I don't think the south is known for crust, but this is clearly the product of a supportive scene. Maybe the most noteworthy band from TN since Hellstomper. (AE) Twitch Records, 2207 Elliott Dr., Nashville, TN 37138

☞ **Atari Star – Moving in the Still Frame, CD** I love how a lot of this was recorded. This is a stark album, in the best possible sense of the word. It's minimal, but doesn't cross the line into stupidity. The chord progressions are obvious and they lyrics blatantly rhyme, but there's something in the voice and in the sound that make you want to believe it. They know how to keep the pace of the album, building and adding sounds at the right time. Simple and elegant, it's not going to cramp your lifestyle, but possibly nicely complement it from time to time. (RB) Johann's Face, PO Box 479164, Chicago, IL 60647

☞ **Atom & His Package - Redefining Music, CD** "What the hell is this?" I thought to myself as the first track ("Undercover Funny") played on my stereo at work. I mean, it's bizarre what comes to be associated with the punk scene. I'm an open-minded guy, but hearing this odd mix They Might Be Giants, Weird Al Yankovic and the Dead Milkmen set to a synthesizer threw me off. The melodies played on "the package" (Atom's keyboard) are often so early-'80s sounding I wondered if it was Yaz or from the soundtrack of *Better Off Dead*. It's catchy as hell, though, which I had heard about Atom & His Package, one of those names I knew but had no music to associate with it mentally. Thus my initial ill at ease evaporated. The keyboard melodies are incredibly catchy, and they somehow work with Atom's nasal, sarcastic vocals. If the songs were all emo or something, I don't think the record would work as well. The lyrics are sharply written with this biting, hilarious element to them that, being a smart ass, I love. (Such a trait is one of the main reasons I like the Dillinger Four as well.) "Anarchy Means I Litter" (track five) is an awesome critique of the ideological myopia of certain members of the anarchist community, and you can't go wrong with songs like "Mission 1: Avoid Job Working with Assholes" and "If You Own the Washington Redskins, You're a Cock." The liner notes have brief intros from Atom about what most of the songs are about, which are usually as amusing as the lyrics themselves. The songs have are often ably backed by guitars and other people's back-up vocals, and there's a cover of Madonna's "Open Your Heart" on here. It's all good, and it grows on you like a fungus the more you listen to it. (KR) Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409-7495

B-Movie Rats – 1-94 Live, CD Bad mastering, way too high-end recording of a decent rock and roll band live in Detroit. I was there, were you, this doesn't do this band justice. (EA) 1-94 Records, PO Box 44763 Detroit, MI 48244

☞ **Bantam Rooster – Mexican Leather, 7"** Two tracks from Michigan's top duo, Bantam Rooster. This was their first release with the new man, Mike Alonso on the traps. You almost don't miss Eric Cook, and those were big shoes to fill. Tom J. Potter has a knack of writing songs that you can't get out of your head, and the A-side, Mexican Leather is a primo example. This two piece band has a sound that is recognizable in about two seconds, and listenable for a little longer. Big Neck Records gives us this fine single to go with Bantam's many, many releases, and in fact this may be as good as any place to start. Their singles are better than their LP's, mostly because they tend to be more raw and less produced. Even with Jim Diamond/Ghetto Recorders at the helm this sounds very four-tracksque. Mr. Diamond also adds some of his organ and sax work to fill out the sound at times. The B-side is a slow song that many may not like, but then fuck you. "Summer in Hamtramck" is the kind of song that shows why your 1982 hardcore ass

should like something other than DOA. (EA) Big Neck Records PO Box 8144 Reston, VA 20195

Ben Grim/The Links – Split, 7" Ben Grim's guitar player must be a big Descendents fan, the opening instrumental track sounds very much like something off of I Don't Wanna Grow Up. The second track is just bland melodic pop-punk. The Links are from Japan and play mediocre pop-punk. (RE) PO Box 467, Neenah, WI 54957-0467

Better Days – S/T, CD These might just be the lamest boys in the land. They're one of the high school style troupes that raids the marching band to fill out their horn section. Then all they need is a front man who can sing smooth and wear a tank top that'll show off his muscles. Or maybe he doesn't have muscles, but is the star vocalist in the church choir. Either way... (RB) Mordros Music, St. Mary's News, Truro, Cornwall

Big Meat Hammer – Please Keep Portland Clean, CD Old punk rockers playing punk rock for old punk rockers. I bet they're missing teeth. Mid-paced stuff with some solos thrown in, and 2 GG Allin covers. (NS) PO Box 7971, Portland, ME 04112

Billion Dollar Mission - The Cup, CD Norway's answer to Hot Water Music do four hardcore-influenced pop songs. (AE) Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215

Billy – The Dream Motion Man, CD Emo is still alive in S. Dakota. This is a re-release of their heartfelt debut CD that was recorded in 1998. Billy plays that emo music that attempts to rock your world (at least that's what their website says). Some crunch, some pained vocals, musical build ups. Yup, it's emo alright. (DM) Braeburn Records, PO Box 902217, Sandy, Utah 84093-2217

☞ **Blueline Medic – A Working Title In Green, CD** I have done it before and I hate doing it. At times when reviewing music I've dropped band names to help get the idea of the music across to folks. It's just easier sometimes. Well, I'm going to do it again in that "Bastard Love Child" kind of way. If you cross Jawbreaker and the Psychedelic Furs together you would get a catchy as fuck punk band named Blue Line Medic. Roots in Punk, with a combination of emo and pop sensibility, and being tight as hell with great song writing and song structure make BM such a great band. These guys are so good in that bound for greatness kind of way. This four song EP is such a teaser for their new full length to come out this summer in the US and probably sooner in their native Australia. Please don't disappoint. (DM) Fueled By Ramen, Inc., PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

☞ **Boomfancy – S/T, 7"** These seven songs that are as urgent and fleeting as the time Boomfancy gets to spend together cause me to dance and yell in elation and frustration. The two singers, girl and boy, overlap, singing and screaming together; I can imagine them clutching each other at the tensest moments. The guitar is wielded handily, with great skill and innovation. The words break your heart then hold it together with five little pairs of hands. Finding and losing friends, creation and destruction, worried loss of sleep, hurried plans and broken vans, relying on faith to make decisions that you are too overexerted to make yourself - breaking out of this great loop of history to create something palpable with unrecognized success. Very close to my heart, this is. (RB) Harlan Records, 7205 Geronimo, North Little Rock, AR 72116

Burning Airlines – Identikit, CD I tried real hard to like this. I loved their debut LP, and all the stuff of their previous bands. This one is just too slow, too repetitive. I would say they are getting too old to rock, but

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andrea Andres (AA)

NEGATIVE APPROACH - S/T Hardcore in its purest form. Negative Approach plays pure unadulterated no nonsense hardcore. NA exploded onto the Detroit punk scene back in 1981. They have since had a huge influence on hardcore and are one of the greatest classic hardcore bands ever. It's really a shame that they're so many kids that have never heard of them. If you want to check them out, all their music has been re-released on Touch & Go Records.

I've been listening to: Cause for Alarm, Elvis Costello, Bloodlet, Pavement

then I should be too. (EA)

Desoto Records PO Box 60932 Washington, DC 20039

By Any Measure - S/T, 7" Standard, straight-ahead hardcore with kind-of-heavy guitars, screamed vocals and no surprises. You've heard it before. (KR)

By Any Measure, 11900 Glen Gary Ct., Richmond, VA 23233

C.R. - Discography, CD Unless you are like me and have been paying close attention since 1995, you may have missed out on the Compassionate Revolution. Posi-core thrash from the east coast! This is a complete discography including every split 7", their full length LP, their S/T 7", some compilation tracks and even some unreleased tracks. Boasting forty-six songs in less than forty-six minutes, that is keeping it real. (SY)

Chainsaw Safety Records, PO Box 260318, Bellerose, NY 11426-0318

The Cancer Conspiracy - S/T, CD I have no expectations at all before dropping this CD on. I am surprised and treated. This is Great! The guitar parts are addictive and everything falls into a solid groove to keep your foot in check. No vocals needed. Just a guitar, bass, a drum set and a saxophone. I feel an 80's vibe coming on while listening to this and it is a good thing. (SY)

SoGoodMusic, PO Box 52128, Ottawa, ON CANADA K1N 5S0

Canyon - S/T, CD The soundtrack to your next pot party. This reminds me of insurgent country bands like Wilco and Son Volt (the singer definitely sounds like Jeff Tweedy), only slowed down considerably with light, dreamy guitar work. At least it's not bad ska-punk. (KR)

Slowtime, P.O. Box 414, Arlington, VA 22210

Cash Audio - The Orange Sessions, CD This is an alterna-blues band that has a heavy Cramps influence. Mind you these songs are mostly instrumental and somewhat interesting to listen to, to a certain degree, but... it doesn't do a damn thing for me and not probably not for the majority of you kids out there. (DM)

Orange Records, www.orangerecordings.com

☞ **Cave In - Jupiter, CD** Cave In's compilation of early recordings, Beyond Hypothermia and their first proper full length were amazing strides in hardcore and metal. Sure, they were coping styles here and there, but the power and experimentation with noise was incredible. Then, early this year, their second full length, Jupiter, was released. Between the years of their first and second album - and years from their high school beginnings (and many, many singers later) - you have a band that grew incredibly. Jupiter should be this band's fourth or fifth album - but it is not. No longer do you have the growling, monstrous vocals that defined the band - and the HUGE sound of metal-hardcore has been replaced with the HUGE sound of, well, space-metal. Or something. Cave In spent that last few years honing their sound, listening to a lot of Rush and Radiohead along the way - and re-defining what it was they wanted to do. The backlash from the hardcore community has been seen at their recent shows, as large portions of their core audience (core, get it?) leaves as they launch into the sec-

ond and third song. However, Cave In isn't concerned about sticking to a formulaic sound. They're obviously musicians interested in expanding their boundaries and Jupiter is definitely a large step in a direction - it might not be what many people wanted or expected, but in this reviewer's eyes (a skeptic at first, as well) it is a positive and amazing step. It might be me just growing with the music, and becoming jaded with hardcore but right now it works, and Cave In should be proud of what they made and should deserve pats on the back for stepping out of their comfort zone (AKA "the scene"). (RE) Hydrahead Records, PO Box 990248, Boston, MA 02199

The Chase - The Better Part of Six Months, CD This was apparently recorded during The Chase's winter tour last year, and boy howdy does the production leave a lot to be desired. Speedy hard core that you can't make out all that well. At least the song titles are entertaining: "You're Never Alone When You're Dancing the Electric Slide." (KR)

No contact information given.

Cherry Valence - S/T, CD Two drummers, two guitars, keys, bass, and vocals sure make for some heavy rock and roll. Another Estrus band plays harder and louder than you. Unbelievably, not recorded by Tim Kerr. (EA)

Estrus Records

Citizen Fish - Life Size, CD The stinky C-Fish are back with 12 new punk songs on Honest Don's Records, (the enhanced disc includes a video). Attitude and English accents for everyone! (BC)

Honest Don's Records PO Box 192027 San Francisco, CA. 94119-2027

The Color Guard - S/T, CDEP Melodic pop with girl vocals; it reminds you of something you've heard before but can't put your finger on. Kind of similar to bands like Sarge & Jeune, but it's not enough to keep me listening. (KR)

Suziblade Music, PO Box 66, Radio City Station, New York, NY 10101

☞ **Contender - Scenic Overlook, CDEP** This band blends a variety of musical styles, but let's call it pop punk as a beginning point. Nothing wrong with that, I like pop punk when it's done well and in an interesting way. And that's just how Contender does it. But while good melodies provide the underlying structure of these songs, there's a lot more going on than hyper fast drumming, lyrics about girls or sugary backing vocals. The singing sounds a little like Alkaline Trio at times, but other times the vocals are yelled or screamed with accompanying backing vocals. The music is predominantly fast, but there are slower, quieter intros. And there are some cool guitar parts and bridges that bring to mind early 90's hardcore. Sometimes I'm reminded of the first Gameface album too. Maybe pop punk is a bad description of Contender, or at least inaccurate. But I'm not going to write emo/punk/hardcore or something to describe these guys. Oh, shit. I just did! There are only 6 songs on here, so let's hear some more, dudes. (NS)

Not Bad Records, PO Box 2014, Arvada, CO 80001

Course of Action - Carving our Way by Tearing our Faith, CD Emotional intense and dark Hardcore with a noticeable metal influence, but not too metallic. Each song on this CD was about five minutes long, so it was

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Art Ettinger (AE)

COMBAT 84 kicks my ass. Unmatched by ANY other UK Oi band, their records bring out the Oi-monster in me. "Orders of the Day," an easy to find repackaged 12" and CD compilation of all of the original band's key studio tracks, is a bona fide punk classic that you MUST check out if you are to have a full and happy life. This comp has the "Orders of the Day" and "Rapist" EP's as well as the non-live tracks from "Send in the Marines." The liner notes claim that it has the demo versions of "Soldier" and "Combat 84," but that's an error—those versions can be found on the split with Last Resort. This is very early dead-on classic Oi with pungent anti-war lyrics and none of the asinine keyboard and ballad crap other bands of the era dabbled with. Yes, the band has some right-wing tendencies, but trust this socialist pubic defender—the music is so fucking good you'll be shouting right along to the classic chants of "it's better to be dead than fucking red" and "filth of society should all die." And as for the song "Rapist," most P.C. punks feel the same way as these guys—don't bitch at anti-punishment me for endorsing this band for rocking when you should be bitching at your punk friends for attending Take Back the Night rallies! This band also has an unessential new EP and is scheduled for a stateside tour later this year. Don't miss 'em!

The latest releases I can't stop listening to are the Limp Wrist and Steel Toe Solution 7"s, the latest LP's from ANTISEEN and Reducers SF (both on TKO), the debut LP's from Toys That Kill and Spazm 151, and the Spider Babies' Ten Inches of Terror 10".

hard to listen to it all the way through without feeling overwhelmed. (AA)
Good Life Recordings, PO Box 114, 8500 Kortrijk, Belgium

Crosstops – Trucker Fuel, 7" Tripped out punk-country with a weird casio thrown in every few minutes just to make you think, "What the fuck?" The A-side, "Yuppie Killaz" is almost funny in a "haha I hate hippies and yuppies too." Sort of way. (EA)
www.thetelegraphcompany.com

9 Cursive - Burst and Bloom, CDEP Cursive is one of those names I seem to hear a lot but couldn't tell you what they sounded like. Listening to this EP, I'm still not quite sure how to describe them. I guess it's a D.C. sort of sound, that rock with occasionally odd musical phrasing and rhythms (start and stop, start and stop) with dissonance that surreptitiously becomes melodic. ("Tall Tales, Telltales," the third track, is a prime example of this.) Long songs with lots of parts that would be a death knell to bands with less dexterity. Cursive seem to get away with a lot, actually. On top of frenetically paced guitars is a cello, the work of new member Gretta Cohn. It's an odd addition for such guitar-heavy rock (think Girls Against Boys, ...And You Will Know Us By the Trail of Dead), and its soothing, smooth sound stands in stark contrast to the aggressively played guitars and drums. Is it a gimmick? Maybe. But Cursive's skill with what they play is impressive, and the songs' complexity tends to work for them, not against them. They never seem aimless; they build on what they have passed, refine it and never lose steam. However, two of the five of the songs ("The Great Decay" and "Mothership, Mothership, Do You Read Me?") have odd codas leading into the next tracks that seem ill-fitting considering what has preceded them. They establish nice platforms for what follows, though, as in the case of "The Great Decay," which seamlessly goes into "Tall Tales, Telltales." If nothing else, Cursive are a very ambitious band; you feel it all 22 minutes. Such ambition could be a sin or genius. Where do they fall? Somewhere between the extremes, in a niche they've carved out and know well. (KR)

Saddle Creek, P.O. Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554

9 Dead Moon – Trash and Burn, CD Wow, there are some winners on this disc. Dead Moon has a big following and you really need to be able to like Fred Cole's voice to enjoy them. Personally, I often find his singing too annoying—though "These Times With You" on the A-side of this LP is one of their best songs to date. I got sucked into, by curiosity, a Pearl Jam concert on VH-1 a few weeks back because they were even covering a Dead Moon song. Jeez, do you think that maybe more than 2 people in that stadium knew who they were? I actually think that the last two Dead Moon releases have made me a fan, something I would not have said five years ago. Total stripped down, trash

rock and roll for your needle. Check out www.emptyrecords.com to read more. (EA)

Empty Records PO Box 12034 Seattle, WA 98102

9 Deadguy – I Know Your Tragedy, CD Deadguy was the best band that Victory Records ever put out. I guess that is not too hard of a task, but Deadguy came around in my life right when I needed them. "Fixation On A Co-Worker" was a great record. They were metal enough to be technical and heavy, but punk enough to not give a shit and just play some good riffs. The two worlds of early Black Flag and Black Sabbath combined. They played their tunes tight but were always on the verge of falling apart. This Album is a live recording from 1996 at CBGB's. Good sound quality and well worth the purchase. The vocals are kind of loud and the guitars are a little sloppy, but it all works out. The liner notes give a full history of the band, and also admits to their full worship/theft of the Unsane. The last track is a cover of Black Sabbath's "Electric Funeral" which was supposed to appear on one of Hydra Head's Black Sabbath tribute 7-inches, but it only appears here. (SY)
Hawthorne Street Records, PO Box 5067, Bloomington, IN 47407

Death On Wednesday - Buying The Lie, CD This thing totally reminds me of Youth Brigade, Sink With California indeed! A bare-bones punk trio kicking out sing-a-long music. A Clash-style layout and the recording sounds good too. Check it out even though they have a silly label name. (SY)

SideCho Records, 1223 Wilshire Blvd. #560, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Deep End – Tsunami, CD This is a sound project turned into a CD. Four songs of moving music in that emo/ indie vein. Some are nice and pretty, some are more upbeat and pretty. Kind of reminds me of a cross between Sunny Day and Mineral... kinda'. (DM)
Love Boat, Andrea Pomini. CP 215. 10064 Pinerolo. Torino. Italy

Dimestore Haloes – Dumb Radio, 7" Two pop tracks that are well crafted and could lighten up your day. Not generic pop-punk, B+. (EA)
www.thetelegraphcompany.com

9 Dirtbombs – Ultraguide in Black, LP Mick Collins (Dirtbombs, Blacktop, Andre Williams, King Sound Quartet) and his revolving band features Tommy Potter (Bantam Rooster) and Jim Diamond (Ghetto Records) on this sophomore effort. This is the best party record of the year, without any doubt. More of a tribute to his youth, Mick pulls out covers of Sly & the Family Stone, Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield, Stevie Wonder, Parliament, the Miracles, and many more. The fuzz sound on this record is phenom. This is one R and B, R and R, balls out stomper that should not, and will not be ignored. Its been in my car for two weeks and everyone seems to love it. My only ques-

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andy Slob (AS)

HALF JAPANESE - 1/2 GENTLEMEN/NOT BEASTS, CD Granted, I got into this band just recently, but supposedly this double CD, 1/2 Gentlemen/Not Beasts, was Half Japanese's debut triple album. Yes, triple debut. This is a DIY classic. Half Japanese prove that, yes, you should write and record songs on the same day that you first take up your instruments. This is beautiful ineptness at its finest. All the songs blurt out of brothers Jad and David Fair as the most pure form of teenage angst. They are just so believable that you forget the tuneless racket that accompanies the vocals. There are songs for the losers in all of us like "Shy Around Girls" and "Girls Like That". There are songs for the punk rockers like "No More Beatlemania" and "Patti Smith". Then they also throw in these fantastic experimental instrumentals that you can hardly believe that they could conceive of like "Shhh/Shhh/Shhh" and "Tn Tn Tn Tn Ki" that remind one of the Swell Maps and Throbbing Gristle. They also musically butcher some many covers, "Tangled Up In Blue", "10th Avenue Freeze Out" and more. Seek this record out kids as a prime example of how to sound honest and heartfelt. I warn you that 99.9 % of the population could not sit through this entire album or would even call it music, but I believe that you haven't lived until you've heard David Fair scream "I don't want some girl who smokes all the time and when I kiss her it tastes like I'm licking an ashtray" in the song "Dream Date".

Things that I've come to enjoy owning recently: Nugget II Box Set, New Dance Show- "I Wish My Friends Would Bury You" cdep, and the new TSOL.

tion is, how did Tommy Potter lay down those funky bass lines? (EA)
In The Red Records 2627 East Strong Place, Anaheim, CA 92806

The Dontcares - Keep 'Em Rolling!, 7" There have been a lot of great straight up rock and roll bands from Sweden in the last few years. This is not on of them, but rather a second tier Swedish band. (EA)
Eternal Broadcasting Records PO Box 138273 Chicago, IL 60613

Dumpster Junkies - S/T, CD Angry-wanna-be-political-drunk-punk in that way that "they hate us" kind of thing. Angry little boys at VFW shows everywhere will love these guys. Grrrr. However, the drummer kind of looks like Stone Cold Austin from his picture. In the immortal words of the Dumpster Junkie, "Viva La Junk". (DM)
Burnt Hairy Butt Records, 7 Spinnaker St. Sandwich, MA 02563

East Bay Chasers - Lock and Load, 7" Two songs of punk rock and roll with faint leanings towards things like the Stitches. Has a cartoon drawing of a car on the cover so you can confuse it with similar releases. (AS)
Industrial Strength Records, 2824 Reggatta Blvd., Richmond, CA 94804

East Coast Panic / Line of Fire - Split, 7" ECP play a real interesting form of street punk with dual male and female vocals. Fast, driving punk about being pissed at the gov't, feeling betrayed and wanting that time lost on someone back. Good stuff. Line of Fire play straight up sXe HC in that old school style. Fast, loud and not bad, but they get props for doing it this way for years. CT still has something to offer. (DM)
Solution Records, 192 South Rd. Somers, CT 06071

Eighteen Visions - Until The Ink Runs Out, CD These guys stole the blueprint for what Hydrahead bands were doing in the Late 1990's. No wonder Cave In had to so drastically change their sound. Damn all the clones! I am so tempted to yell "Coalesce Rip-off!" but there are some other influences going on here. I try to find something redeeming in this recording amidst the technical guitar riffs, the guttural vocals, and the click-click bass drum, but I can't. I have heard it all before and these guys make it sound real stale. (SY)
Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

The Embarrassment - Blister Pop, CD This is a live collection of covers and originals by this late 70s/early 80s pop band from Wichita, Kansas. This is the last remaining stuff that was dug up, after a double-disc anthology was released covering most of the previously recorded material. The Embarrassment plays power-pop with hints of country and punk. (RE)
My Pal God Records, 47 Hardy Drive, Princeton, NJ

Enemies/Pitch Black - Split, CD The Enemies have an awesome very melodic dark sound that still manages to have a bit of an upbeat pop

undertone. The Enemies feature Dave Edwardson from Neurosis on bass. Pitch Black, as their title suggests, had a unique old school horror punk kind of style. Cause for Alarm meets old school Misfits with piercing vocals. (AA)

Lookout Records 3264 Adeline Street, Berkeley Ca 94703

Envy - Burning Out The Memories, 10" For the dozens of shitty and bland records I hear, one record comes along that knocks me on my ass and reminds me why I care. Envy's new record is a fine example of this. A 10" release. Short enough to keep my interest, but long enough to be potent. Envy are from Japan and play emotional hardcore with an overall nervous twitch that keeps the tempo going. Frantic and heavy guitar parts mixed with passionate vocals. It might be hard for you to track this one down, but your efforts will be rewarded. (SY)
Molair Industries, THEVENOT Fabien, 86, rue de Meyrin, 01210 FERNEY-VOLTAIRE FRANCE

Exploders - S/T, 7" Some bands can pull off the whole "rock" vibe well while others inevitably come across as posers. Heavy on bluesy, early-period rock 'n' roll riffs with Jon Spencer-style vocals, the Exploders seem to pull it off with their rock charms intact. (KR)
Teenage USA Recordings, PO Box 91, 689 Queen St. W., Toronto, ON, M5V 1X6

Explosivo - The Uh-Oh, CDEP This recording is coming up on a year and a half old now, and it definitely feels that way. Dual-vocal punk rock the way Fifteen or Jawbreaker might have done it - but more of a melodic-hardcore feel. The CD comes packaged in a nice plastic sleeve, with decent graphics as well - definitely feels like some time was put into it all. The name comes from a Tenacious D song (and the Jack Black band is thanked as well) Six tracks total, with one decent instrumental. (RE)

Rok Lok Records, PO Box 137, Rocky Point, NY 11778

Eyehategod - 10 Years of Abuse (and Still Broke), CD I admit I don't know as much about this wild drug abusing band as I should, but this compilation of a 1990 demo, a live radio broadcast from 1994, and a live set from Europe in 2000 is a nice introduction to Eyehategod's Slappa-Ham meets C.O.S. meets metal antics. (AE)
Negative Action Group, PO Box 30685, New Orleans, LA 70190-0685

Face of Change - Keep the Balance, CD FOC hail from Japan, I believe and play late 80s/early 90s hardcore similar to Youth of Today or old Shelter. They aren't really doing anything new, so if you are into this kind of music - here you go. (RE)
Soul Force Records, MLP, Apartado de Correos 18.199, 28080 Madrid, Spain

Fartz - What's in a Name, CD I'm so happy this band is out there thrashing. This is the raunchy childish purity you've been waiting for. The

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian Czarnik (BC)

Thank god I finally get to write a review for a band I like. This month's Punk Planet had the worse shit to listen to. The music scene doesn't seem to be any good. Everyone listen ...STOP MAKING SHITTY CDs! Tour, tour, and then go on a tour and then make yourself a 7 inch record. Anyhow this edition of what I loved in yesteryear is all about AC/DC. You have to love this band if you are a rocker. And any early record is a piece of major label rock history. "Highway to Hell" (the late great Bon Scott on vocals) came out in 1979 and still kicks ass! If you liked any of my drumming for Bollweevils and/or Oblivion, thank this record. I listened to it all the time and taught myself how to rock from it. This is a masterpiece from a band that plays loud basic rock and roll with no frills. AC/DC is to heavy metal and rock what the Ramones were to punk. A damn good solid unit that you know what to expect from record after record after record. With cuts like "Walk All Over You", "Beating Around The Bush", and "If You Want Blood (You've Got It)" this record remains one that still burns up my turn table. The police even wanted to blame this band for making that devil freak Richard Ramirez murder people because he wore their hat and they wrote the song "Night Prowler." Stupid pigs...AC/DC never killed any..well there was that girl that got crushed at the concert but besides that. Simply put AC/DC kicks ass with their basic blues based hard rock. Angus is a guitar god and Phil Rudd is the drummer that never needs a drum fill to get your attention. Get this or any early AC/DC record at a used store and learn that the basics can be beautiful!

Top Five punk'ish bands that are on my c.d. player: Hagfish, old Green Day, old Smoking Popes, NOFX, The Muffs.

music and lyrics are rudimentary and naïve; but these guys are completely immersed in their rock and it makes me smile. (RB)
No Productions

Fartz - What's In A Name...?, CD The original pride of the Seattle rock scene return with a CD full of re-recordings of old tunes interspersed with what appears to be some new ones, although it's definitely tough to tell. Jack Endino hits the production perfectly, and wham bam, it's 1982 all over again. High energy, basic, thrash hardcore with Blaine's pre grindcore, but obviously heavily influential in that scene, crazed ass vocals. Granted, some of the subject material seems as trite as a band name starting with the letters DIS these days, but damn, this throwback is still a good time. Next time write more new songs! For the uninitiated, think early Poison Idea or some of the better Nardcore bands or any good local hardcore band. Raw and ready, the Fartz still kick it. Glad to see that the lyric sheet still has spelling mistakes. (AS)
Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 19092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092

*** The Fatal Flying Guillotines - The Now Hustle for the New Diaboliks, CD** It started off like firecracker going off in your hand. From the start, about four years ago, the Fatal Flying Guilloteens had everyone who witnessed their live show either totally floored from laughing or amazement. With their own brand of fucked up garage-rock meets The Fall/ Rye Coalition, with a western flair (complete with matching cowboy outfits, masks, and cap-guns), the Guilloteens have somehow managed to (until recently) stay within the Texas radar. They are the band you hope every touring band has a chance to see, if only to spread the myth *that* much more. Last year Estrus put out the "Shake Train" 7" which might be one of the all time great party songs ever. "New Diaboliks" opens with the definite sex jam of the year "Role Models" and has one of the catchiest fucking choruses I've heard in a while. Then the record shifts to "Call the Draw", a balls out hardcore track, before shifting to the slow and twangy "Slow Train to Right Now." Following this is the love ballad for classic western criminals like Jesse James and Billy the Kid which features a devious bass-line breakdown - totally subtle and ferocious at the same time. Tim Kerr put his magic touch on the full length and, while I still put my full support behind the live show over the recorded ventures - this record is the best the band has to offer if you aren't lucky enough to see them. Oh, yeah, I have very reliable sources that they totally destroyed Garage Shock this year as well, and Austin will never be quite the same ever again. I highly recommend this record to everyone. (RE)

Estrus Records

Fireballs of Freedom / Lopez - Split, 7" FOF give a fast and furious punk

blaster, "I Got a Line on You." While, Lopez gives us
Dirtnap records PO Box 21249 Seattle, WA 98111

The Flamingo 50 / Fabiola - split, 7" It's good to see that Fabiola is bringing the moog to punk rock. Or at least noise pop or whatever these boys call their pop lite, indie tunes perfect for crunchy summer days. Whatever that means. The Flamingo 50 trio play more of a noisy punk rock that you could put your dancing shoes on and swing to. Of course that is if you dig the crunchy summer days perfect for dancing. What am I talking about? (DM)

Soda Stream Politics, PO Box 844 Liverpool L69 7TT, England

Flim Flam Man - Exploding My Vogue, CD Extremely weird strange artsy experimental cracked out totally insane music with the craziest whacked out vocals and lyrics I've ever heard. I fell in love with it immediately! It reminded me of the Dead Kennedy's, but somehow more fanatical. (AA)
Turning Worm Music www.flimflamman.com

Found My Direction - The Path Remains, CD Angry melodic hardcore from Australia. Turn your happy good-day into a mean-ass bad-day! (BC)
Resist PO Box 372 Newtown NSW, Australia 2042

Foundation - S/T, CD Fair-weather punks turned working class "heroes" are cheapening folk music left and right. I dislike these lyrics very much, and that's the biggest measure of acoustic folk songs I think. All you need is to sing with a raspy voice, right? Wrong. The material on this CD is very flat and fake sounding. (RB)

Write c/o Ann Beretta, PO Box 12246, Richmond, VA 23246

Framed, The - You're Wreckin' Me, 7" A mix of old school SoCal punk and older East Bay stuff. Mid-paced, catchy and slightly rockin'. It's been done better, but this ain't bad. (NS)

Lucky Sevens Records, 3617 12th Ave. S #3, Minneapolis, MN 55407

Future Adventures - Movimenti Il Futuro, CD Dreadful emo that rhythmically resembles a 16 year-old punk learning to drive a car with manual transmission. Keep this away from your mentally ill friends. (AE)
Hermit Records, PO Box 309, Leeds LS2 7AH UK

Glenn's Army - Band in R.I., CD Very upbeat pop-punk, quick and catchy. It had the kind of energy to put a smile on your face, get you singing along and dancing around. (AA)

Glenn's Army, 8 Roger Williams Ct. Portsmouth, RI 02871

Good Riddance - Symptoms of A Leveling Spirit, CD Thick sounding and highly produced nineties style hardcore (think Fat) whose interchangeable songs could stand some more varied structures and sounds to pull

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Dana Morse (DM)

I'm a sucker for older stuff that may not be the most ideal for classic punk reviews. However, when in the mood, I throw on a copy of GENERATION X on the turntable. This is Billy Idol's old band when he was leaning more towards the punk side instead the new wave side of life. This is really good stuff if you dig crunchy guitars, catchy tunes, kinda snotty vocals and just a damn good time. There's no one particular album I would recommend but there are a bunch of collections out there if you're just willing to put the time in to find them. Just make sure the record/CD has at least "100 Punks Rule", the original "Dancing With Myself" or "Ready, Steady, GO!" on it. Just be ready for some fun. (ed note: Dana has two reviews here because of missing last issue). Quicksand's self titled 7" and LP Slip are a must have. I know that some of you out there may be wondering why this is a classic selection. Well it's been a decade since Quicksand first hit the scene to prove that HC kids had a sensitive side. Moving music that fucking rocked but didn't have the sound that made people "mosh" it up in the "pit" to "fuck shit up". People started realizing that NYC had more to offer then fingers in the air. This was music that meant something to people. Technically it was awesome, lyrically it was awesome. End product: ...awesome. Having moved from California working in a record shop, I started realizing that people were starting to forget about this band. But for those who know, they won't forget. For those who find out, they will cherish this record forever. However, these guys were partially responsible for starting the whole emo thing but I'll skip that part...

Listen to or else: Gorillaz, Buck 65 on Anticon, the first Soul Coughing CD, the new TSOL and Teddy Duchamp's Army. Buck 65-"Man Overboard" on Anticon, Blueline Medic EP, Gorillaz, Zero Zero, and my Simpson toys that talk.

it over the top. (AS)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

Gasoline - Fake to Fame, CD This has been out for quite awhile now, but is just making the reviews. This fucked-up blues punk explosion from Japan is un-believable. Sounds as if it was recorded with blown speakers. Get with it, you nit. (EA)
Estrus Records

9 The Great Deceiver - Jet Black Art, CD Hey, I know that voice! Tomas Lindberg from At The Gates returns from obscurity. The Great Deceiver hail from Stockholm, Sweden and throw you back a couple feet with their heaviness. Think early Entombed, throw in some hardcore and add in one of the best metal vocalists. The beauty of At The Gates was that Tomas' vocals were more hardcore then metal. They were not your typical low growls or high shrieks, they reminded me more of Filth, then Napalm Death. Jet Black Art is worthwhile listen. Great guitar riffs and a steady blast-firing drummer, over-laced with some excellent wah pedal use, make this album intense. I'm interested to see the future of this band. (SY)

Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

Hatchbacks - S/T, 7" Scratchy, distorted punk rock and roll that you can easily stick between your Motards and X-Rays seven inches. (AS)
Turkey Baster Records, PO Box 222059, Dallas, TX 75222-2059

The Haunted - Made Me Do It, CD Heavy and intense Swedish metal. The thrash occasionally gives way to some harmony and the hardcore vocals have hints of melody here and there. These guys won Swedish Grammys too. Man, Sweden always manages to kick our ass. (RE)
Earache Records, 2nd Floor, 43 West 38th Street, New York, NY 10018

Hellions, The - ST, 7" Punk rock played hard and fast by ex Gwar, Hagfish and Speeddealer members. Later Poison Idea comes to mind. Music for older guys to get drunk and slam dance to. A solid 7" with 4 songs. (NS)
Turkey Baster Records, PO Box 222059, Dallas, TX 75222-2059

Heston Rifle - 20 Strings, CD Moody and jangly math rock with violin. Very raw and emotional that goes from melancholy to raging in 6.2 seconds. Lots of build ups, interludes and aggression throughout this 4-song/30+ minute CD. (DM)
Inner-Flight Records Box 314 3280 Sunrise Hwy Wantagh, NY 11793

The Higher Burning Fire - In Plain Song, CD Even though it's on Second Nature, it doesn't remind me of the heaviness driven by Coalesce or Isis. Leave the metal behind and take yourself in to this very beautiful

and chill landscape of music. These men take a direct influence from the Beatles' song writing complexity. "In Plain Song" is a creation of some great songs backed with piano and strings. The players of The Higher Burning Fire exhibit some serious talent and this recording is a great thing to sit back and enjoy for every note played. A fine addition to the Second Nature catalog. (SY)

Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 11543, Kansas City, MO 64136

Honky - House of Good Tires, CD These creeps fancy themselves as clever rockers with style and sass. Reality is they are really stupid and made up some boring songs. Take some advice and grow a big mole thing on your face, turn it way up, and change your name to something that has to do with engines. (RB)

Hall of Records, PO Box 69281, West Hollywood, CA 90069

In Dying Days - To Forget Yesterday, CDEP Melodic hard core with your standard screamy vocals and metal riffs. Only three songs, but it still manages to get old pretty quickly. (KR)

Re-define Records, 11 Lady Stewart Blvd., Brampton, Ontario L6S 3Y2 Canada

9 The Intima - No Lullaby For Sleep, CD This is truly a beautiful band for the most part. Musically, Intima is intense while taking full advantage of having a violinist amongst the traditional guitar, bass, drums collective. They tend to be quite moving to riveting and then soothing and sedate. However the vocals take a bit away from the music at times. The vocal duties are shared by male (similar to the guy from the Buggles ["Video Killed the Radio Star"]) and female members. Their words are just kind of semi shouted along with the music. I think folks who dig art punk or bands like Gang Of 4, the Ex or Bonfire Madigan may dig this seven song EP. Really good effort. (DM)

Zum, PO Box 4449 Berkeley, CA 94704

9 Iron Cross - Live For Now!, CD First off Iron Cross is not a Nazi band, enough already! This release was so overdue that it is ridiculous. Iron Cross entered most of our worlds through the "Flex Your Head" comp back in 81'. You get the three songs from "Flex Your Head" along with two songs from the same session. Both the "Hated and Proud" and "The Skinhead Glory sessions" are represented, with a handful more of extra songs. With street punk the rage these days, a band like Iron Cross are finally getting their props. If you grew up on Dischord hardcore this will be a fun trip down memory lane. It was for me. (EA)
GMM Records PO Box 15234 Atlanta, GA 30333

Jan Michael Vincent Car Crash - A Cobra Trilogy, CD This is a putrid attempt at grindcore. It was almost going to be good in the intro when

Eric Action (EA)

Something About Mary, *Repo Man*, and *Great Rock and Roll Swindle*. All three movies have something in common—JONATHAN RICHMAN. He is the goofy songwriter who sang in the trees, streets, and finally shot at the end of *Something About Mary*. His song "Pablo Picasso" was being played at the bar in *Repo Man* and is on the soundtrack. While the Sex Pistols covered his most famous tune, "Roadrunner" in the *Great Rock and Roll Swindle* and is on that soundtrack as well. It is hard to imagine that all three of these Jonathon moments have escaped you, but I doubt you own the *The Modern Lovers*, the nine song LP or twelve song CD. Besides Jonathon, you get a backing band with future members of the Cars and the Talking Heads. You really need to go out and get the CD, or pick up the LP and a copy of the Warner Brothers compilation *Troublemakers* to get two of the bonus tracks. The songs on this disc range from all out blasting fun in "Roadrunner", to slow and touching in "Girlfriend." It is impossible not to love this disc, except for the one weak track "Hospital," which is a little too long. The nasally vocals, with their addictive Boston accent will get you singing along, "that's a girl – fren, that's a G-I-R-L-F-R-E-N." Not a typo in the spelling there, just the way you say it with the baked bean accent. The three bonus tracks, "I'm Straight", "Government Center" and "Dignified and Old" are three of the best tracks on this disc so I for once will say the compact disc is the way to go. Everyone can relate to these love songs, even if you haven't walked with your heart in your hand. Recorded by greats like John Cale, Kim Fowley, and Jerry Harrison, these tracks recorded in the mid-seventies sound so modern that you have a hard time putting them into perspective. This stuff sounds fresh today, imagine how they sounded in the Disco era. There are also many other great recordings of live, and early material that you should get, but start here. His later material varies a lot in style, so be careful out there. I can't help from wanting to move to Boston every time I listen to this great collection.

Currently: Nuggets II box set, Both Pagans discs on Crypt, Pretty Things re-releases on Norton, High Fidelity (the book) and finally reading it, New Dirtbombs LP, New Screws LP, the first Vibrators single and the last to finish the collection that I finally found (yeah!), Filth and the Fury DVD, and finally the Easybeats Anthology that took me too long to get hip about.

the strings were getting ready to rock, but of course they had to unleash their so-called fury and muddle it all up with contrived false insanity. Those free-form breakdown sections won't make up for it either. (RB)
Rage of Achilles, PO Box 20508, London, NW8 8WT, England

Japanic – The Social Disease, CD If there ever was a mod musical, Japanic would be the ones to make the music for it. This is a happy go lucky, very upbeat indie project filled with keyboards, guy and girl vocals, fundamental oldies and indie style guitar and catchy rhythms. This is so good in so many ways and it's kind of cute, too. This is kind of a Grand Royal sounding band in a lot of ways. Japanic is Bis-esque in a some ways, but not really. These guys and gal definitely strove for a fresh sound when they got together. If they keep up the hard work, Japanic may be a name to watch out for. And if not, you'll have that cool unknown item in your collection. This CD gets the "be the first cool kid on your street and own this" recognition in my opinion. (DM)

Plethorazine Records, 6775 Bingle Road, Houston, TX 77092

Jerk Circus – Nevermind The Suburbs, CD Bringing fun back to Punk Rock again. These guys are tight, fast, humorous, hard, and really got their shit together. Jerk Circus hails from Oakville, Ontario and have definitely done their homework. These kids figured out what works and did it right. Catchy hooks, a few ska riffs to mix things up and songs about girls, hating the government and wasting your time in a 9 to 5. This is good stuff including their rendition of the Beatles and extra bonus tracks. Be the cool kid and check these guys out before they get signed to LookOut! or Fat (which they deserve if they're looking for that kind of recognition). (DM)

Redefine Records, 11 Lady Stewart Blvd., Brampton Ontario L6S 3Y2 Canada

Joan of Arc – How Can Any Thing So Little Be Any More?, CD Ex Cap'n Jazz dudes play acoustic indie. Half of the 8 songs are instrumentals and/or feature a little kid singing emo type lyrics. I don't know, dude. (NS)
Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810

John Wolfington – S/T, CD Indie rock at its most melodramatic. Troubled musician music with drum machines to match. Maybe I'm being too harsh but I was never the fan of Depeche Mode or musicians who dig that stuff.

Coffee shop rock, yeah baby, it's bad, even with the breathy vocals. (DM)
Smells Like Records, PO Box 6179 Hoboken, NJ 07030

The Jones - Gravity Blues, CD Melodic punk similar to The Story So Far that more than occasionally tiptoes the line between catchy and cheesy. Lots of power and melody but also formulaic. (KR)
Ding Dong Ditch Records, PO Box 2409, Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2409

Jumbo's Kill Crane – II Cadavers Eccellente, CD I imagine these dudes have Tool stickers on their trucks. Perhaps even Alice in Chains. Just another group of mid-America white boys trying to act disturbed and sell records. (RB)
Tarlick Records, PO Box 23188, Stanley, KS 66223

Junio – A Future Lived in Past Tense, CD Sounds exactly like a band on Desoto Records should sound like. This is one that will grow on you. Has all the up's and down's of a good emotional record. (EA)
Desoto Records PO Box 60932 Washington, DC 20039

Just Short of Living – Chasing the Blame, CD Another five A+ gym students who figured out enough to sound like a bad version of Youth of Today (only even worse lyrics). They're probably even Rangers fans. Thee mighty Phillies shall crush you, and your youth crew shouting will cease forever! (RB)
One Shot Records, PO Box 51315, Denton, TX 76206

Kaito – You've Seen Us.. You Must Have Seen Us, CD Female fronted noise pop that's fun for the whole family. Something that will get your toes tapping and wonder what am I listening to. It's something you may expect from Matador Rec. or Sonic Youth sound-wise. Interesting. (DM)
Devil In The Woods, PO Box 579168 Modesto, CA 95357

Kevin Devine - Circle Gets The Square, CD It's funny how different things sound at different times of the day or when you're obviously in different moods. That's how I felt about this CD. I first listened to it after I had come home from work. Thinking that the Gun and Roses and Eminem references on the cover would lead to some interesting entertainment contained within, I was upset to find only a guy and his guitar playing overly emotive vocal folk songs. I thought back to my louder, faster era where I would have immediately written this guy off

Kyle Ryan (KR)

ECONOCHRIST. I attended a Jesuit college prep high school in Houston, Texas. Although it was a great school. Academically, it had this repressive side to it (more so than your standard public school because of the religious element) that produced a few antiauthoritarian smart asses like myself (along with an inordinate amount of fraternity larvae). Econochrist provided a soundtrack to our semi futile rebellion. While I had "Minor Threat" written in Liquid Paper on my backpack, my friend John had an Econochrist patch on his that said "Your World is Sickening." Hell yeah, we were really inciting riots with such incendiary backpack accessories. But nothing captured the resentment of our environment better than Econochrist's records *Ruination* and *Trained to Serve*. It was great hard-core punk rock with lyrics full of bile that we just fed off of. For instance, "Divine Right," an anti-religious oppression song from *Trained to Serve*, had this rad part where Ben (the singer) repeated "What makes...you think...that you're my...superior?" four times, enraged. Or "Invertebrate" from the *Skewed 7*: "You plead for acceptance you'll plead to goddamn scum/you'll sell out anyone yet you lick the ass of all/your nose is caked with shit you'll follow any who call/who the fuck are you?" I mean, c'mon, you don't get that on your standard emo record. The music had its metal tendencies, but it could be melodic too. More than anything, it was unapologetically punk. I loved it then, and I love it now. These guys were underrated when they broke up in 1993, and their legacy isn't as strong as it should be, which is a crime. Last year, Ebullition released an Econochrist two-CD discography, which features 41 tracks covering everything Econochrist did. It rules—my own stupid high-school nostalgia notwithstanding.

Stuff I'm Listening to Now for Future Nostalgia: Burning Airlines, Identikit; Flyswatter, Black and Blue; The Jealous Sound EP; Bad Brains, Rock for Light; The Clash, London Calling

as a sap. Later, on a sleepy, early morning ride to work, Kevin's well crafted songs of failed relationships really seemed to hit the spot. Especially his line "I'm starting up a boy's club for guys with record collections and the girls they hurt to get them". This is mostly just two acoustic guitar tracks with vocals, and I would look forward to Kevin spicing up some of the flavors in his songs. Hell, some of these singer songwriters, like John Prine for instance, can ride a good twenty year plus career on this kind of stuff. Warning, it's not punk rock. (AS)
Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215

Kilowatthours - Strain of Positive Thinking, CD Slow-buildups of piano and layered guitar in this mostly instrumental four piece. The album has a slight-Elliott feel in the way the piano and build-ups work together. Ben Lord, who was also in Falling Forward, is in this band. There is also a very out of place cover of "Candy Says" by the Velvet Underground. (RE)

Temporary Residence Ltd., PO Box 22910, Baltimore, MD 21203

Kojak - Crash Mother Fucker, CD This is indeed a raging menace of a CD. Superb, in fact. What I cannot resolve, however, are the sometimes brain-dead lyrics and the pin-up picture on the cover. Are they merely misogynist jerks that happen to write great hardcore songs? I hope not. (RB)
CNP Records, PO Box 14555, Richmond, VA 23221

Kolya - S/T, CD God, if it weren't for the awful vocals on this (that sort of talked-yelled thing), I wouldn't hate it as much. Emoish & reminiscent me of Vitreous Humor, it's nothing terribly interesting. (KR)
Caulfield Records, PO Box 84323, Lincoln, NE 68502

Lazycame - Finbegin, CD Solo projects are routinely self-indulgent & bad, and this debut solo record by William Reid of the Jesus & Mary Chain follows precedent. Paced like paint drying at times, it goes from lazy acoustic to incongruously electronic to just weird in the space of a few tracks. (KR)
Hall of Records, PO Box 69281, Hollywood, CA 90069

Lies, The - Resigned, CD Pure going to sleep music. Somber, new wavy stuff with predominant drums and synthesizers. Bauhaus for indie rockers. (NS)
Kill Rock Stars

♪ **Lightning Bolt - Ride the Skies, CD** Where the fuck did this band come from? Bands like this make me believe that I will NEVER get tired of searching for new music. Just when I get to a point where I'm pretty

sure that I'm familiar with a ton of music - a band comes up, and out from what seems like nowhere to kick my ass and re-evaluate what I consider to be amazing music (another good example of this would be The Fucking Champs). Last summer, in a last minute effort to save an Orchid show from falling through, I helped book a show at my University. I was told that another band would be playing called Lightning Bolt. Okay, I figured if they were on tour with The Red Scare and Orchid they would probably be within the same genre of music and be pretty good. They were better. They brutally kicked both of those bands ass with a live show that words cannot describe. L.Bolt are a two piece from Providence, RI and come from the Load Records school of insanity (along with Mens Recovery Project, Landed, Arab on Radar, and others) - basically a city full of art school kids who have nothing better to do than make beautiful noise. Bass, drums, a mic-head (that is placed under the ski mask of the drummer - the third instrument) and one of the LOUDEST shows I have ever witnessed, L.Bolt play the most incredible structured noise I have ever heard, up to this point. Buzzing, grating bass lines, insane drumming, and weird vocal-chord noises combine to make some of the most amazing music that I've gotten into lately. I highly recommend this to anyone who is interested in expanding their definition of punk or hardcore - and is willing to take a chance on something new. (RE)

Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI, 02901

Limitpoint - It All Takes Time, CD Saves The Day, New Found Glory and Stryder fans take notice. Very professional punk/hardcore from 3 total dreamboats! Just as good (bad?) as those other bands. The drummer's name is Elmo! (NS)

1520 Diamond Ave., So. Pasadena, CA 91030

Little John - Too Much Fun, CD Kind of Mod-indie-alterna rock. If you took the rock qualities of Weston and the pop sensibility of John Westerberg of the Replacements and that little something that Weezer and Everclear had, this is the end result. That's the name game for Little John. Or, comfy driving music. You can decide. (DM)
Crane Mountain Records, www.cranemountain.com

Mail Order Bride - Revolt of the Philistine, CD Funky alternarock with strained vocals that have some effect on them that's really annoying. The type of stuff you'd hear at some bar that advertises "live music on Fridays." (KR)

Bad. Mail Order Bride, 1817-B Vernon St. NW, Washington, DC 20009

Neal Shah (NS)

"Hey, dude reunion shows are lame. You should be supporting bands that are keeping the scene alive now." Fuck that shit. There are way too many bands and few of them are good. And they wouldn't be here if it weren't for rehashing the music of older bands. With that said, I just saw THE FACTION in San Jose and as a fan and skater of about 15 years, it was awesome. So let's talk about the Faction "Collectable" CD. Even back in the day it was hard to find all of the Faction vinyl, so when I saw that Goldenrod was putting this out a while back, I was stoked. You heard me, stoked. There were certain songs that I grew up with that are now as familiar to me as any 80's song. Songs like "Institutionalized", "Living In Darkness", "Donut Shop Rock". The Faction had those kind of memorable, classic songs, but they were more obscure and we all had to pass around 4th generation copies of their LP and whatever we could find. The Collectable CD has all of their best stuff on it, like Tongue Like A Battering Ram, Why Save The Whales and of course, Skate and Destroy. Bands today affiliated with skate rock either sound like Pennywise or "thrash", but no one has done a good job recreating the skate rock sound because none of those bands rock like this. The thrash bands skip the melodies and the "skate punk" bands have no personality in their music. I'll take a band that sings about getting cokes over a band that spouts empty slogans any day. Oh, and there's a new CD called "Uncollectable" that was just released that has tons of other demo, live and studio songs that weren't on the other Faction CD.

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Altaira Records, 204-3480 Main St., Vancouver, BC V5V 3N2 Canada

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a strong organic feel to it, no over-compressed guitars or reverberated drums present here. A pleasant surprise. (SY)

LOMO Records, 2217 West Ferdinand, Chicago IL 60612

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Snapshot Records, PO Box 175 Georges Hall, NSW 2198 Australia

MXPX - The Renaissance e.p., CD For all you MXPX lovers out there, this disc features nine mundane pop-punk tunes to keep you warm and fuzzy. For me, this c.d. needs to say hello to the bottom of my trashcan. (BC)

Fat Wreckchords

My So-Called Band - The Punk Girl Next Door, CD All I would have to do is put the name of the band and CD and you'd know how sucky it was. This flaccid album employs just about every pop punk cliché in the book. I can say that at its best it sounds like The Wynona Riders. But then you can figure out what they're singing and all hope fades. (RB)

Yesha, Inc., PO Box 31725, Charlotte, NC 28231

9 The Mystery Addicts - Unluck and Shame, CD Picture a smoke-filled bar. You're not the oldest person at a show for a change. In fact, it's a 21 and up show. You feel young despite being in your mid-20's. The bands suck: bad covers, bad metal, and bad hair. You saw the flyer and thought you were going to a punk show. You're starting to feel sick to your stomach. If the next band's more of the same you're out of there. Three guys get on the stage looking sort of like the Trash Brats or maybe the band from the movie The Driller Killer. They plug in and play. And you're blown away. Now, I've never seen The Mystery Addicts, but I bet their shows go something like I just described. They play fiery glam punk, with influences ranging from The Bags on down. A bare bones rock 'n' roll ass shaking from the first track to the last, this is fastidiously perfected ROCK. I don't know if they've been a band for long or not, but this is a fine debut. Imagine a glam/fem more rocking version of The Heartdrops. Take me back to Ohio TONIGHT! (AE)

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Ryan Batkie (RB)

Need to get knocked off your punk rock rocker? Few albums do it better than FLIPPER'S *GENERIC ALBUM*. They were the masters of driving, monorhythmic, masochistic punk rock. The music on this album is mystifying the way it can be so unrelentingly plodding and yet have sharp, concise, dead-on lyrics from a man named Will Shatter. (And he did, too.) For this time period they were perfection. Generic walks the perfect line between the freight train that was Black Flag and the insanity that was The Germs. Brilliant. But, like my beloved Gang of Four, the more they paid attention to what they were doing the more boring it got. Later albums are not as good, or even good at all. But, slow and annoying, Generic will make you feel their pain.

Early Summer loves: Pixies (esp. Live at BBC & Doolittle), occasional one-night stands with Karp, Violent Femmes bus song, always Mirah, a new Operation Ivy phase has begun to take hold and I'm so happy, Shotwell/Miami split again, This Bike is a Pipe Bomb, made out with Billy Bragg once, got in a fight with Rites of Spring but had some great make up sex

Nine Shocks Terror – Paying Ohmage, CD Angry ultra violence HC punk with thrash roots. It's hard, tough, aggressive, fast, and other adjectives that would describe this band or getting your ass kicked in record time. (DM) Sound Pollution, PO Box 17742 Covington, KY 41017

No Motiv - Diagram for Healing, CD This record plays like a sampler of the "Vagrant Sound." Produced by Trever Keith, it sounds similar to Face to Face and the Alkaline Trio. Poppy, melodic punk that has plenty hooks like those bands—but just like those bands, it can get stale. (KR) Vagrant Records, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., #361, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Notice – One Name For Multiple Diseases, CD Notice is quite the talented band. They tend to play that really moody, lulling and at times moving kind of music. It's really beautiful stuff somewhere between Sunny Day and the Get Up Kids, not as melancholy as one or as poppy as the other. (DM) Accident Prone, PO Box 460686 Escondido, CA 92046

Novasonic Down Hyperspace - Mathing Moonlight, CD Slow, dreamy pop that uses lots of instrumentation to instill an atmospheric quality to songs seemingly focused on mood (similar to Belle & Sebastian). It sounds almost new agey at times, like it should be playing over stock footage of a waterfall. (KR) Spectra Mobile, 17663 Torrence Ave., Lansing, IL 60438

Nymb – The Breathing out Vapors Single, CD A moody but quite moving and driving female fronted band. Kind of that indie/ emo (emo in a good way) rock persuasion. Kind of reminds me of the band Ashes but a tad mellower. Even the one acoustic live track rocks in that mellow kind of way. Don't be afraid, it's really good stuff. (DM) Forge Again Records, 21098 N. Kenmore Apt 1F, Chicago, IL 60614

Oozies - Nation Out of Hand, CD I started out liking this CD. It is recorded real good, the songs are written well, and its fast punk. Yet, go ahead and add some generic political lyrics and I am burnt out by the time I get to song four. I can live with it, but I am not sure why I would want to. Produced by East Bay Ray. (SY) Industrial Strength Records, 2824 Regatta Boulevard, Richmond, CA 94804

One A.M. Radio - A Cloud's Fear of Kites: A Kite's Fear of Heights, CD Extremely mellow guy-playing-guitar-by-himself songs similar to Elliott Smith. It's the kind of stuff you have to be in the mood for, like when you're reading in your apartment on a rainy day. (KR) Garbage Czar Records, PO Box 207129, New Haven, CT 06520

Outtaline - S/T, CDEP SoCal pop punk of the Blink-182 variety. Not objectionable, and the singer can at least sing on key for the most part, but this sounds pretty much like every other pop-punk band you've ever heard. (KR) Outtaline, 6371 Firefly Drive, San Jose, CA 95120

Ows – S/T, CD Jazzy- emo off beat stuff. (BC) Jade Tree Records 2310 Kennwynn Rd. Wilmington, DE. 19810

9 Pagans – Shit Street, CD This (along with the Pink Album) arrived at the PO Box the day after I purchased both on vinyl. My emotions turned from anger to sure joy that I received the bonus tracks on the disc versions. That said lets get into why you should own this release. Your pop-punk ass probably knows a few of these songs through covers. But let's be honest, you are not worth a damn thing in my book if you don't have classics like "What's This Shit Called Love?" and "Six and Change" permanently tattooed on your brain. Hell, these two songs alone are worth the price of admission – dig. If you already own the previous Crypt release which featured many primo cuts, but it lacked the sound that this re-master has. Cleveland saw the Pagans release four singles from 1977-1979 and you get em' here along with un-released material as well. Sure most of these songs can be found here and there, but you won't get the same quality, packaging, and liner notes that makes this the release to get. The vinyl doesn't include the fourteen or so live tracks, but to make it up you get a cover of the Electric Eels, "Jaguar Ride." D'oh now you need to buy both versions too. I can't remember a week that has gone by in a long time that I didn't throw a Pagans song on. I could talk about them forever, but I suggest you read the singers 14,000 plus word story on the Pagans (www.geocities.com/pagans_pages). If you haven't been hip to the Pagans, may the mighty lord save you and I wish I was there the first time you listen to this. (EA)

Crypt Records 3 Rading Ave, Frenchtown, NJ 08825

9 Pagans – The Pink Album, CD Read the Pagans – "Shit Street" review first. Not many friends of mine own the "Pink Album" until now. The original was only a 500 pressing, and then another 1500 were re-pressed in 1987. I picked up my re-press in 92' for five bucks and have praised its glory since. I would go as far as saying that it is one of the biggest punk rock gems hidden in the rough – until now. Crypt had the decency to release this scorcher as an 18 track LP, or 26 cut CD. The radio broadcast bonus material, sounds as good as any studio releases. Though most don't think the "Pink Album" to be as essential as the tracks found on the "Shit Street" disc, this is still better than 99.9% of the stuff found in you local record store. I pulled out the re-release, the new Crypt LP and CD of "Pink Album" and there is definitely a lot more here on the Crypt discs, though the LP version misses a few of the original tracks. Just buy it all to be safe. The bonus tracks are not low quality, crap versions, etc. Even a seasoned Pagans fan was surprised and happy on this one. I will curse to all those who believe that this re-formed version of the Pagans wasn't the real Pagans. Those are the dopes who didn't own the tracks are had too much FM on their blood. I could talk about them forever, but I suggest you read the singers 14,000 plus word story on the Pagans (www.geocities.com/pagans_pages). If you haven't been hip to the Pagans, may the mighty lord save you and I wish I was there the first time you listen to this. (EA)

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Early Summer loves: Pixies (esp. Live at BBC & Doolittle), occasional one-night stands with Karp, Violent Femmes bus song, always Mirah, a new Operation Ivy phase has begun to take hold and I'm so happy, Shotwell/Miami split again, This Bike is a Pipe Bomb, made out with Billy Bragg once, got in a fight with Rites of Spring but had some great make up sex

Nine Shocks Terror – Paying Ohmage, CD Angry ultra violence HC punk with thrash roots. It's hard, tough, aggressive, fast, and other adjectives that would describe this band or getting your ass kicked in record time. (DM) Sound Pollution, PO Box 17742 Covington, KY 41017

No Motiv - Diagram for Healing, CD This record plays like a sampler of the "Vagrant Sound." Produced by Trever Keith, it sounds similar to Face to Face and the Alkaline Trio. Poppy, melodic punk that has plenty hooks like those bands—but just like those bands, it can get stale. (KR) Vagrant Records, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., #361, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Notice – One Name For Multiple Diseases, CD Notice is quite the talented band. They tend to play that really moody, lulling and at times moving kind of music. It's really beautiful stuff somewhere between Sunny Day and the Get Up Kids, not as melancholy as one or as poppy as the other. (DM) Accident Prone, PO Box 460686 Escondido, CA 92046

Novasonic Down Hyperspace - Mathing Moonlight, CD Slow, dreamy pop that uses lots of instrumentation to instill an atmospheric quality to songs seemingly focused on mood (similar to Belle & Sebastian). It sounds almost new agey at times, like it should be playing over stock footage of a waterfall. (KR) Spectra Mobile, 17663 Torrence Ave., Lansing, IL 60438

Nymb – The Breathing out Vapors Single, CD A moody but quite moving and driving female fronted band. Kind of that indie/ emo (emo in a good way) rock persuasion. Kind of reminds me of the band Ashes but a tad mellower. Even the one acoustic live track rocks in that mellow kind of way. Don't be afraid, it's really good stuff. (DM) Forge Again Records, 21098 N. Kenmore Apt 1F, Chicago, IL 60614

Oozies - Nation Out of Hand, CD I started out liking this CD. It is recorded real good, the songs are written well, and its fast punk. Yet, go ahead and add some generic political lyrics and I am burnt out by the time I get to song four. I can live with it, but I am not sure why I would want to. Produced by East Bay Ray. (SY) Industrial Strength Records, 2824 Regatta Boulevard, Richmond, CA 94804

One A.M. Radio - A Cloud's Fear of Kites: A Kite's Fear of Heights, CD Extremely mellow guy-playing-guitar-by-himself songs similar to Elliott Smith. It's the kind of stuff you have to be in the mood for, like when you're reading in your apartment on a rainy day. (KR) Garbage Czar Records, PO Box 207129, New Haven, CT 06520

Outtaline - S/T, CDEP SoCal pop punk of the Blink-182 variety. Not objectionable, and the singer can at least sing on key for the most part, but this sounds pretty much like every other pop-punk band you've ever heard. (KR) Outtaline, 6371 Firefly Drive, San Jose, CA 95120

Owls – S/T, CD Jazzy- emo off beat stuff. (BC) Jade Tree Records 2310 Kennwynn Rd. Wilmington, DE. 19810

9 Pagans – Shit Street, CD This (along with the Pink Album) arrived at the PO Box the day after I purchased both on vinyl. My emotions turned from anger to sure joy that I received the bonus tracks on the disc versions. That said lets get into why you should own this release. Your pop-punk ass probably knows a few of these songs through covers. But let's be honest, you are not worth a damn thing in my book if you don't have classics like "What's This Shit Called Love?" and "Six and Change" permanently tattooed on your brain. Hell, these two songs alone are worth the price of admission – dig. If you already own the previous Crypt release which featured many primo cuts, but it lacked the sound that this re-master has. Cleveland saw the Pagans release four singles from 1977-1979 and you get em' here along with un-released material as well. Sure most of these songs can be found here and there, but you won't get the same quality, packaging, and liner notes that makes this the release to get. The vinyl doesn't include the fourteen or so live tracks, but to make it up you get a cover of the Electric Eels, "Jaguar Ride." D'oh now you need to buy both versions too. I can't remember a week that has gone by in a long time that I didn't throw a Pagans song on. I could talk about them forever, but I suggest you read the singers 14,000 plus word story on the Pagans (www.geocities.com/pagans_pages). If you haven't been hip to the Pagans, may the mighty lord save you and I wish I was there the first time you listen to this. (EA) Crypt Records 3 Rading Ave, Frenchtown, NJ 08825

9 Pagans – The Pink Album, CD Read the Pagans – "Shit Street" review first. Not many friends of mine own the "Pink Album" until now. The original was only a 500 pressing, and then another 1500 were re-pressed in 1987. I picked up my re-press in 92' for five bucks and have praised its glory since. I would go as far as saying that it is one of the biggest punk rock gems hidden in the rough – until now. Crypt had the decency to release this scorcher as an 18 track LP, or 26 cut CD. The radio broadcast bonus material, sounds as good as any studio releases. Though most don't think the "Pink Album" to be as essential as the tracks found on the "Shit Street" disc, this is still better than 99.9% of the stuff found in you local record store. I pulled out the re-release, the new Crypt LP and CD of "Pink Album" and there is definitely a lot more here on the Crypt discs, though the LP version misses a few of the original tracks. Just buy it all to be safe. The bonus tracks are not low quality, crap versions, etc. Even a seasoned Pagans fan was surprised and happy on this one. I will curse to all those who believe that this re-formed version of the Pagans wasn't the real Pagans. Those are the dopes who didn't own the tracks are had too much FM on their blood. I could talk about them forever, but I suggest you read the singers 14,000 plus word story on the Pagans (www.geocities.com/pagans_pages). If you haven't been hip to the Pagans, may the mighty lord save you and I wish I was there the first time you listen to this. (EA) Crypt Records 3 Rading Ave, Frenchtown, NJ 08825

Russel Etchen (RE)

HUGGY BEAR – TAKING THE ROUGH WITH THE SMOOCH, 10" I wasn't ever a big fan of Huggy Bear, their full-length never made me jump around in my room the way this EP did, and I never heard the Gravity single, so...yeah. But I do know that on a whim I picked up this 10" one day because I had some extra money and heard some good things. Sometimes records bought on a whim become the records that totally pinpoint eras in your life. This record totally defined the years when I was having a rough time at home, and I was just getting heavily into self-publishing and teen power (not girl or boy power, totally just pro-teen / anti-adult stance). Huggy Bear were part of a group of bands that came out in the early to mid 90s that told the mainstream music world to fuck off and took control of their lives and did what they want. Bikini Kill, Heavens to Betsy, Bratmobile, Nation of Ulysees, and others were part of the music revolution that re-defined punk rock and the ethics involved. Huggy Bear's choice of songs and pacing on this record are an absolutely perfect mix of abrasive post-punk, feedback and spoken word. The way tracks flow in and out of each other in a fucked up mix of noise and feedback work so flawlessly that you don't notice song changes sometimes. Tracks like "No Sleep" force themselves on you until you are picking up the needle every few minutes to re-hear everything over and over. I urge you to pick this record up. (RE)

Top Six Right Now: Lighting Bolt "Ride the Skies", Destroyer full length, the collected Hutch Owen book, Clinic – all, Glass Candy and the Shattered Theatre – all, The Fatal Flying Guilloteens – The Now Hustle for the New Diaboliks LP

The Pine – S/T, 7" Very heart felt, noisy and full on guitar sound that can move you with an equally talented rhythm section to back this sound. Kind of makes me feel the same way when I heard Texas is the Reason for the first time. Kind of... The vocalist does remind me the Wearkerthans in some ways, which works for the band for the majority of this 4 song 7". Better then decent, but not quite amazing. (DM)
Pine, 2624 Aberdeen Ct., Bakersfield, CA 93306

Pistol Grip - The Shots From Kalico Rose, CD Good, entertaining, oi influenced, bouncy punk rock which I found a whole lot more enjoyable than that last Rancid album. Do we still need to sing about the PMRC? As they obviously lost, didn't they? (AS)
BYO Records, Post Office Box 67A64, Los Angeles, CA 90067

*** Planes Mistaken for Stars - Fuck with Fire, CD** Are you a fan of long, elaborate and intricate music buildups that begin quietly before reaching complex sonic plateaus? Do you like music that has a sense of atmosphere, mellow yet moody? You know, sorta like Yes? This is NOT your record. From the octaves that open "Levelless," the first track on this record, it's one angry, all-out punk-rock song after another (the exception being the title track, a brief, guitar-only affair). These guys would dance on Yes's grave given the chance. Although this fast-paced punk is definitely melodic, it's got enough heaviness to it to remain angry. The screamed vocals, which are unfortunately a little too buried in the mix, help that, too—lyrics like "I can smell the sin on you" aren't exactly ringers for the words to "Over the Rainbow." A lot of bands with an amazing intensity can be boring musically, and "all-out" punk can be a euphemism for "simple," but Planes don't suffer from that. The intensity is matched by enough changes in both style and execution to hold my interest. The changes don't always work, as in the case with "Rhythm Dies," track seven, which has a long, slow build up that jumps into hyperspace quickly and clumsily. Aside from that and a couple other weaker points, this record grows on me with successive listens. It's hard not to be smitten with the energy of what you hear, especially if you like hard core. After listening to this, I'd dance on Yes's grave with Planes Mistaken for Stars. (KR)
No Idea Records, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

Pointdexter – Today I Thought Of Murder, 7" Punk Lite? Indie Pop? Don't know, but these kids write these somewhat catchy tunes. The production has that demo quality though but it's still not a bad effort. (DM)
Clabbered Milk Records, 300 Criqueaside Dr #53 Morehead, KY 40351

Polysics – Hey! Bob! My Friend!, CD Total Devo inspired crazy electronica via Japan. Wow! This would get a long review except in only takes those simple words to get my point. I love the fact that they don't hide

that they are taking Devo to the next level – be the cool kid on your block. (EA)

Asian Man Records PO Box 35585 Monte Seereno, CA 95030-5585

Pontius CoPilot – Madagascar, CD Hmm, three guys who probably grew up listening to early 90's bands like James, the Lemonheads (acoustic years), XTC (yes, I know they've been around before the 90's), dada, Swervedriver and the Gin Blossoms. Altrna-fuckin'-rock. (DM)
Hello Records, PO Box 591 Lexington, KY 40588-0591

Potential Getaway Driver – Fire, Ice and Lukewarm Water, CD If they would have put the energy and wit they used to write bios of themselves into writing clever songs, this would have been a much better album. Straight ahead mid-tempo rock songs with personal lyrics that don't quite cut it. The guitar has a sugary sound I can like easily, but it's put to poor use with these tunes. (RB)
Pop Riot Records, PO Box 14985, Minneapolis, MN 55414

9 Propagandhi – Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes, CD Well holy crap, it's finally here. Did it disappoint you? Of course it did. It's not nearly as unique and inspiring as the previous album, but it's real good. (Thankfully it's not like the first one, that sucked.) What's important is that the politics are still there and as strong as ever. That's what's more important with this band anyway: the wit and humor used to deliver their concise commentary. The music on this album is getting back to the basics and isn't filled with invention and frenzied guitar attacks like Less Talk, More Rock was. This is sad. In the end this album is usually boring and I wonder why they didn't just write a book instead. (RB)
Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119

9 Puta-Pons, The – Return To Zero, CD This CD is probably straddling the line between enjoyable and annoying, but I'm in a good mood, so I side with enjoyable. These guys, well, one guy and 2 gals, play pretty upbeat garage/trash rock with the vocal duties trading off between the 2 girls in the band. The voices are the part that could be considered annoying by some, or at certain times, but I like them. They're kind of obnoxious. Sometimes they do sing, but most of the time it's done in a high-pitched yell or shriek. But it sounds good with the jangly, poppy music. At times it reminds me of the B-52's. I keep expecting Fred Schneider to jump in and yell "Butter Bean!" There are 2 songs with keyboards and I think they should add them to more of the songs. They have some good/funny lyrics too. Like "Get up get out let's punk rock tonight." A little goofy, but hard not to sing along to. I'm sure the Puta-Pons are a fun live band, so check them out if you have the chance. (NS)
Vinahyde Records, PO Box 470583, Chicago, IL 60647-0583

Scott Yahtzee (SY)

Hell yes, I am choosing an IRON MAIDEN record as my pick of the issue. With a primitive "Eddie" drawn on the front, his eyes peering off the cover and into mine, the self-titled Iron Maiden record still stands tall as my favorite. Every song is tight, brilliantly executed, and has an appealing heaviness to it. Raw loud guitars, abrupt tempo changes, galloping bass, these are all the things that would go on to make Maiden famous. Before Bruce Dickinson's vocal duties came Paul Di'Anno, and Paul will always have a special place in my heart. His lyrics weren't as learned and themed towards Greek mythology as Bruce Dickinson's were. His lyrics were often simple and sometimes inane, but they were close to the heart. Iron Maiden captured a raw power on this album. Who knew this metal stuff was going to be loved so much? They just wrote songs and played their hearts out and the end result is a classic record. This is the album where you get such Iron Maiden classics as "Phantom of The Opera," "Running Free," "Iron Maiden," and my favorite, "Charlotte The Harlot." Paul was around for one more album after this, "Killers" which I can also recommend for some classics.

Music I haven't gotten sick of yet: Bad Brains – Quickness LP, 9 Shocks Terror – "Paying Ohmage," Army of Ponch – Demo CD, Queen – Flash Gordon Soundtrack, King Crimson – Red LP, and an old Housemartens tape I found at my parents.

Qualm – Preventing Explosion, Cdep Fast pop punk with cool guitar parts, played with fervor and gusto! There seem to be a lot of good bands coming out of Colorado lately and this is another one of them. (NS)
Not Bad Records, PO Box 2014, Arvada, CO 80001

The Reds / Sweet JAP – Split, 7" This is a great split indeed, something hard to come by these days (or ever?) The Reds have the tempo turned to eleven with two great tracks, "That/This" and "Make it Right." Sweet Japanese American Princess bring a noisier all out attack with two tracks of their own. Garage punkers rejoice. (EA)
Nice and Neat Records PO Box 14177 Minneapolis, MN 55414

Remus and the Romulus Nation – S/T, 7" Wow! Really good emoish/Gravity style release. Six songs that come in the obligatory silk-screened envelope. Takes me back to 1993 or so, and this sounds as good as anything of that day. Lyrics – political in nature. (EA)
Soul is Cheap PO Box 11552 Memphis, TN 38111

Reversal Of Man – Discography, CD Hey emo wuss! Check this out before you place that EBAY bid on that overpriced out of print seven-inch. All those Reversal Of Man records that you want to drop mad loot on, they are collected on one CD. The split LP with Puritan, the Holocron split LP, their self-titled 7" and even their Four Song demo. Add some other splits and a couple of compilation tracks and you get everything released by ROM besides the Ebullition record. (Still In Print) Banshee screams and blast beats. Overly distorted guitar. You know the drill. (SY)
Schematics Records, c/o No Idea Records, Po Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

Reynolds – Minecxio, 7" Fucked-up joke record with goofy samples between each of the "songs," purportedly recorded in Buenos Aires. I smell a gag. (AE)
Freedom From, PO Box 582391, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2391

☞ **Rise Above – Genesis, CD** This young Avail-influenced hardcore band from Pittsburgh is really great. One of Avail's biggest contributions to hardcore is that superior bands ripping off elements of their sound are cropping up everywhere (not to slag Avail, but if it weren't for their live shows they'd be pretty fucking overrated). These guys are probably Christians, or at least goofballs of some sort 'cuz they sing about "light" and "sin" and use the word "shine" a lot. But they're good at playing fucking FAST and switching to faster when need be. The off key vocals on the few slower song sections are overshadowed and somehow excused by the bite of the screams on the other songs. This makes much better use of backing vocals than is customary for the genre, with pseudo-harmonies replacing the generally expected technique of shoutouts. And the drummer has some surprising tricks up his sleeve, a pleasant reminder that technically competent bands don't have to flaunt their musicianship by going highbrow. There's still room in

hardcore for trying something a little new with the sticks. The backpack crowd just might have to take their packs off while this band's playing so they can knock about. A good time was had by all. (AE)
Rise Above, PO Box 18211, Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Sagoh Twentyfourseven – Then I Corrupt Youth, CD Crappy god-loving punk/hardcore with bad rock vocals. A pox on thee! (NS)
Rescue Records, 1075 Bay Blvd., Suite A, Chula Vista, CA 91911

Save The Whale – Firsthand Footprints, CD I'm not sure if these guys are a some college band or a band that just needs to be tighter or the victim's of poor production or all reasons. They kind of play pop punk with a tad bit of alternative music overtones. They have potential but... I couldn't listen to this CD again. This should have been saved for a demo tape. Nice packaging though. (DM)
www.savethewhale.8k.com

Saves the Day – I'm Sorry I'm Leaving, CD 5 songs that feature a cover of the Modern English tune "I Melt With You." Did I mention my personal view (outlawed in these short reviews...mind you) that this shit is too damn wimpy! (BC)
Immigrant Sun Records PO Box 150711 Brooklyn, NY. 11215

☞ **Screws – Shake Your Monkey, LP** Mick Collins (Dirtbombs, Blacktop, Andre Williams, King Sound Quartet) and Terri Wahl (Red Aunts, Cougars) team up for this sophomore effort. This time with a new rhythm section you are presented with a very blues inspired set. Ike Turner, John Lee Hooker, and more get covered on this fourteen tracker. Not as punk as their first release *Hate Filled Classics*, in fact you rarely hear Teri's voice. Even though I am not one who likes albums to grow on me, I want them to knock me out the first time, this album does need to grow some. In fact after about the tenth listen, I know really like this release. Mick has done little wrong when it comes to music, and this is another fine example of his Midas touch. (EA)
In The Red Records 2627 East Strong Place, Anaheim, CA 92806

Secretos del Corazon – Des Foits Il Faut Que J'y Pense, CDEP European melodic hard core with screamed vocals that sometimes don't seem to fit the song (see track 2). Musically not bad but the whole package gets tiresome. (KR)
Get Up & Go! C/O Nanouk de Meijere, Schwarzenbach 2, 76596 Forbach, Germany

Shandon – Fetish, 2xCD I have a problem with bands putting out a QD then printing the CD to look like a record, and even going so far as to add a sound clip of a needle being placed onto some vinyl and sounding scratchy and beautiful. From there it goes on to become a sucky ska CD rehashing the same ole stuff for the millionth time. Some songs are

Italian (I think), but most are in English. This band has a fan club. (RB)

Sightings - S/T, 7" If your friends have any class, they'll look askance at you if they catch you grooving to this pretentious art-rock trio from NY. Garage rock meets emolicious drum techniques. Puke. (AE)
Freedom From, PO Box 582391, Minneapolis, MN 55458

Snuff - Blue Gravy, CD The latest EP from this terrible pop-punk band is a true disgrace. As much as I try to defend the big label pop stuff, this is an awful and derivative EP that sounds like Starship on some tracks and Dire Straits on the others! (AE)
Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119

Someone Else's Problem - Everything Just Needs to Stop, CD Poorly recorded hardcore in the Civ/Gorilla Biscuits vein (a Gorilla Biscuits cover is on here, too). Lots of shout-along choruses with your standard preachy hard-core lyrics. "Everything Just Needs to Stop"—like this CD. (KR)
One Inch Punch Records, PO Box 30642, Albuquerque, NM 87190

Sorry About Dresden / Strunken White - Rock School Split, 7" S.A.D. play that crazy indie rock that's all the rage these days. Kind of like Braid gets into a fight with Weston. Kinda catchy, kinda jangly, kinda not bad. S.W. play a bit more interesting style of music. An influence of post hardcore circa the early to mid 90's is present. This is a very good thing, fore they do it well. Unfortunately there is only one song by them on this split. (DM)
Moment Before Impact, www.momentbeforeimpact.com

Soviac - The Stolen Car Recordings, 7" Emo inspired, Swedish punk. The recordings sound so warm and alive that this single makes my top ten singles of the year so far. Four song single with great packaging. (EA)
<http://urupunk.cjb.net> Its from Sweden so check on the web first

Stereo - No Traffic, CD This is the slickest pooppy rock ever probably. There is nothing more boring in the world than a super-compressed radio-friendly production. This album is that and hook-laden to the max. Together with the stupid lyrics this is all a recipe for disaster. Dinner is served, unfortunately. (RB)
Fueled by Ramen, PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

Stereobate - Selling Out In The Silent Era, CD Math rock that moves you like the churning tide of noise and pop. Stereobate fluctuates in sound throughout the album, nevermind within each song. However, they do have that certain quality that compliments itself so that it doesn't seem that it is a completely different band after each track with no direction at all. The music goes from a quiet tune with sounds of the playground to outer space to aggressive rock to a simple striding rhythm. Once you think you have down what the band is doing, forget it, they throw a musical curve at you. Stereobate also has the occasional vocals that do not diminish any of the songs on this disc in the slightest. If you dig bands like the Turing Machine, Tortoise, Godspeed YBE or Tarentel, you should really dig these guys. Recommended. (DM)
Distance Formula Recordings, 66 North West St. Brooklyn, NY 11211

The Sticklers - For Entertainment Purposes Only, CD These kids are probably the shit in Honolulu. This CD isn't that well recorded and it's kind of sloppy but yet, I really enjoy their goofy antics and crunchy guitars. They're that band that will probably never make it too big outside their hometown scene but yet kids will talk about for years. Hopefully I'm wrong. Similar to Your Mother, the Dickies and Sugar Plum Dandy. (DM)
Sticklers, PO Box 235789, Honolulu, HI 96823

Stone Coyotes - Situation Out of Control, CD The situation is definitely not out of control. The only thing out of control is their expectation that playing a guitar with flames on it will somehow shave 20 years

off their lives. It goes way uphill once you get past the opening title track. It even gets heartfelt at rare moments. The voice sounds very good and the lyrics have a very fitting style. The guitar however doesn't hold my attention and stays the same from song to song where it would be better to change it up. Don't be surprised if this band turns up in a barroom near you sometime soon. (RB)

Ariel, 2999 Shady Hollow East, Boulder, CO 80304

Strangers As Heroes - This Is Not A Result Of Chemistry, CD These kids have put out an aggressively catchy, upbeat and great quality tight recording. S as H definitely get the toes a tapping throughout the this five song EP but disappointingly not while crossing new territory. These guys kind of have that "Get Up & Save The Stryder Kids" sound, down pat. However, I believe they fit into that 87 to 91 percentile of the bands with that sound out there today. I hope for these guy's sake that the scene doesn't get more saturated then it already is so they can get some recognition. Give them a try if you like that sound, you probably won't regret it. (DM)
What Else? Records, PO Box 1211 Columbus, IN 47202

The Swords Project - S/T, CD CRAP (BC)

Absolutely Kosher Records 417 Fredrick St. CA. 94117

Sybarite - Musicforafilm, CD This is the soundtrack to an independent film, *Kill Me Tomorrow*, which I've not heard of but must be either futuristic or dark or both as the music on this album feels dark and dancy. Comprised of guitar and electronic music, and solely created by Xian Hawkins (who joined the Silver Apples when they re-grouped several years ago) - Sybarite might be much more interesting if seen in the film, but alone it doesn't come across as all that unique or powerful. The songs where the guitar is more important are better, but as a whole, I have a feeling the record depends on the film to really be powerful. (RE)

Temporary Residence Ltd., PO Box 22910, Baltimore, MD 21203

Ted Bundys - Look What We Dug Up, CD Rarities from an unknown metal band that definitely has that we did it in our basement or bedrooms feel and sound. They call it "porn rock" but it left me cold. (AS)
Swill Product, PO Box 1408, Lincoln Park, MI 48146

Ted Leo & the Pharmacists/The One AM Radio - Split, 7" Ted Leo contributes two very lo-fi songs (one being a Lungfish cover). It is similar to a lot of the early stuff he did as a solo act. I'm not sure why it is all so lo-fi, because live it's awesome. The One AM Radio contribute the better side of this split with some very quiet acoustic songs, non-descript ins style, but really good nonetheless. (RE)
Garbage Czar Records, PO Box 207129, New Haven, CT 06520

Ted Leo and the Pharmacists - The Tyranny of Distance, CD You better like this sap stuff to endure this release. I liked the pop band, Chisel, but Ted's solo stuff, though finely crafted, is just a pale imitation to someone like Elvis Costello. Backed up by a bunch of indie-rock veterans this will make a lot of people really happy. (EA)
Lookout Records

Teddy Duchamp's Army - S/T, CD This is so fucking rad! Punk rock just the way I like it. This six song CD has a sound that is mature, melodic, aggressive and is catchy as fuck. From what I've heard about this 5 piece is that they come from a lot of different bands including Anti-Flag and has become a full time band from being a New Year eve's party side project. But regardless of their history these kids will definitely be one to keep an eye on if they don't call it quits in the near future. This is punk outfit comes with heart, feeling, a sense of humor and the ability to tell it like it is. Few bands go for this sound, fewer bands pull it off and make it sound good. (DM)
Hope Records, PO Box 71154 Pittsburgh, PA 15213

9 **Tem Eyos Ki / Hundred Years War - Split, 7"** Another supreme record from Harlan. The Arkansas kids have the utmost passion and good sense for the rock. Tem Eyos Ki is one of the most beautiful bands to ever emit sound waves. There are so many instances and layers of calculated guitar work in their songs all you can do most times is shake your head. The occasional rock-out breakdown is added to keep you from lapsing into seizure. The vocals are a whirling collage of beautiful singing and intense, spat forth screaming. It all makes sense. Present is one song that could have been an album's worth of material for other bands. As many superlatives as I could try to use to describe this song, I couldn't begin to talk about the live show or the new recordings I've heard. Do whatever you have to, but you must see this band. Hundred Years War devotes their side to a freight train-esque driving force of a song. They are a blunt object. Get out of their way. (Actually you should get close, but this record is the closest you can come now.) Both sides of this record bear the mark of greatness: you like it the first time and you like it the 100th time. (RB)

Harlan Records, 7205 Geronimo, North Little Rock, AR 72116

Thou - Put Us in Tune, CD This is thin pop music that's quarky and entertaining enough. I have a sneaking suspicion it was made completely with a computer. That's not bad, I like how the sounds are weird. I guess it doesn't really matter what they're singing, but it helps. (RB)

See Thru Broadcasting

Thrall - Hung Like God, CD The vocals on this are by Mike Hard from the Sultans of Strange, so if you like them chances are you'll like this. The vocals are very distorted and wicked with tons of growling and moaning, it's almost as though he were screaming each of the songs from his deathbed. The band provides the perfect backdrop for his grotesque screeching. "Soundtrack of the apocalypse." (AA)

Reptilian Records 403 S. Broadway, Baltimore MD 21231

The Trans Megetti - Fading Left to Completely On, CD Very nice clear vocals. The melodies were awesome and the baseline always complimented them perfectly. It was very melodic without being too polished or pop. The guitars were forceful and distorted and the drummer was all over the place at times. They have a lovely dark poetic sound. (AA)

Germ Blandsten Records, PO Box 356 River Edge, NJ 07661

True Feedback Story - S/T, 7" First, let down, no feedback. It's a punk, hardcore, emo meltdown. Six songs without choruses, although "Saturday Night is Killing Me" really hits the spot/mark. Think basic Rites of Spring. (AS)

PO Box 12773, Gainesville, FL 32604-2773

9 **True North - We Speak In Code, CD** This CD has been out for a while now, but I feel like giving it some extra love. For those of you that don't know True North are from Florida and members are taken from such excellent bands as Palatka, Twelve Hour Turn, and Strikeforce Diablo. My first True North experience was when they played a party at my parent's house in Michigan that was to celebrate my family moving out of the house. It was a crazy night full of senseless fun that almost got the house burnt down. "We Speak In Code" is a perfect document of the band. The vocals attack with a strong rhythm section backing them up. The guitars play chaos and melody, sometimes reminding me of Drive Like Jehu and other times making me think of J.F.A. In the end, the True North formula is actually four guys bringing forth their strengths and their flaws to create a totally unique sound. This album is too short, as most of the good ones are. Also you might want to track down the True North/ Red Scare split, that stuff smokes! (SY)

No Idea Records, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

9 **TSOL - Disappear, CD** Albums from reunited bands usually just suck! I held steadfastly to that theory till the Descendents proved me to be such a misguided fool. TSOL has done the same. Who woulda thought that a band that had been through so many different lineups, breakups, multiple versions of the band playing at the same time, and above all that, so many different styles (everyone remembers the eighties hair metal version) could pull this off. On "Disappear" three of the original members decide to bury the old argument's hatchet and record new a LP that makes younger bands sound like infants. Big thick guitars punctuate songs that fall somewhere between their first EP and the "Dance With Me" album. The music on this is just fantastic. It almost doesn't need words. It's that catchy. Don't get me wrong because Jack's vocals help complete the TSOL sound. And here he comes across like a punk rock version of Ian Astbury. A lot more style than most of the one dimensional singers today. I've listened to this over ten times in the last five days, and it just keeps getting better and better. Recommended. (AS)

Nitro Records

Tusk / He Who Corrupts - Split, 7" Tusk is metal noise core with breakdowns and some other stuff. Kind of noisy and fast and in your face. He Who Corrupts plays weird frantic doom punk / death metal like I've heard before but not from one band at the same time. Has the occasional poppy bass to it as well. Interesting if you dig the style. (DM)

H.W.C., 196 Fairfield Elmhurst, IL 60126 USA

Twelve Hour Turn - Bend Break Spill, CD This is a four-song disc full of slower paced angst music. The disc (which is 6ppd.) features some sloppy handwriting. (BC)

No Idea PO Box 14636 Gainesville, FL 32604

Two Finger Point - Give Me New, CD This band has a confusing name, because one would think that a band called Two Finger Point would be standard brainless youth-crew hardcore. However, it may have something to do with a weak recording, but they come across as much more emotional, with a pretty strong DC feel. At random times the singer sounds like some of the stuff Chris Leo did with the Van Pelt, in that it's very spoken-sung and other times he kind of sounds like Guy Picciotto from Fugazi. Whether that was intentional or not does really matter. It's a pretty good release and I'd like to hear where this band goes from here. (RE)

So Good Records, PO Box 52128, Ottawa, ON, CANADA K1N 5S0

Unitas - Porch Life, CD New old school sounding punk rock (yet another No Idea release) for the new year 2001 which is kind of old now. This band keeps the music basic and good and has interesting things to say. (BC)

No Idea PO Box 14636 Gainesville, FL 32604

Unknown - Pop Art, CD This is lame rock with new wave art and old wave music. The last thing we need is uppity Brits playing nice nice pop songs. (RB)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 19550, London, SW11 1FG, UK

9 **The Unseen - The Anger and the Truth, CD** It's easy to dung-swipe allegations of fashion punkdom, but let's face it--- mohawks always have and always will look cool. More prolific than most other street punk bands, Boston's The Unseen are back with a third full-length already! Lots of Boston's other great bands of the Unseen era are now kaput, like The Showcase Showdown and August Spies. But by the time you read this, The Unseen will still be kicking and will just be getting off their summer tour with Lower Class Brats. I hope you took the time to see 'em because they are definitely one of the premiere bands of our time. They know they're no geniuses, so their lyrics don't strive for perfection. But after years of checking out Exploited-influenced spiky punk bands and losing a wide chunk of

my hearing range, I can say with some degree of authority that these guys blow 80%-90% of the bands of the genre away. By a third album, you might expect some slower songs or cheesy overproduction, but these guys remain serious about their brand of traditional hardcore punk. I had my moment of doubt when I saw this CD in my package, but it's every bit as catchy and raw as their first LP. I wonder if this was released on vinyl as well. If so, that's definitely the way to go when you pick this up (not that it's ever NOT the way to go). You get twelve new pure pogo anthems here, packed into 25 minutes. Grab a drink and turn this way the fuck up! (AE)
BYO, PO Box 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067

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Charm PO Box 1190 Olympia, WA. 98507

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I-94 Records, PO Box 44763 Detroit, MI 48244

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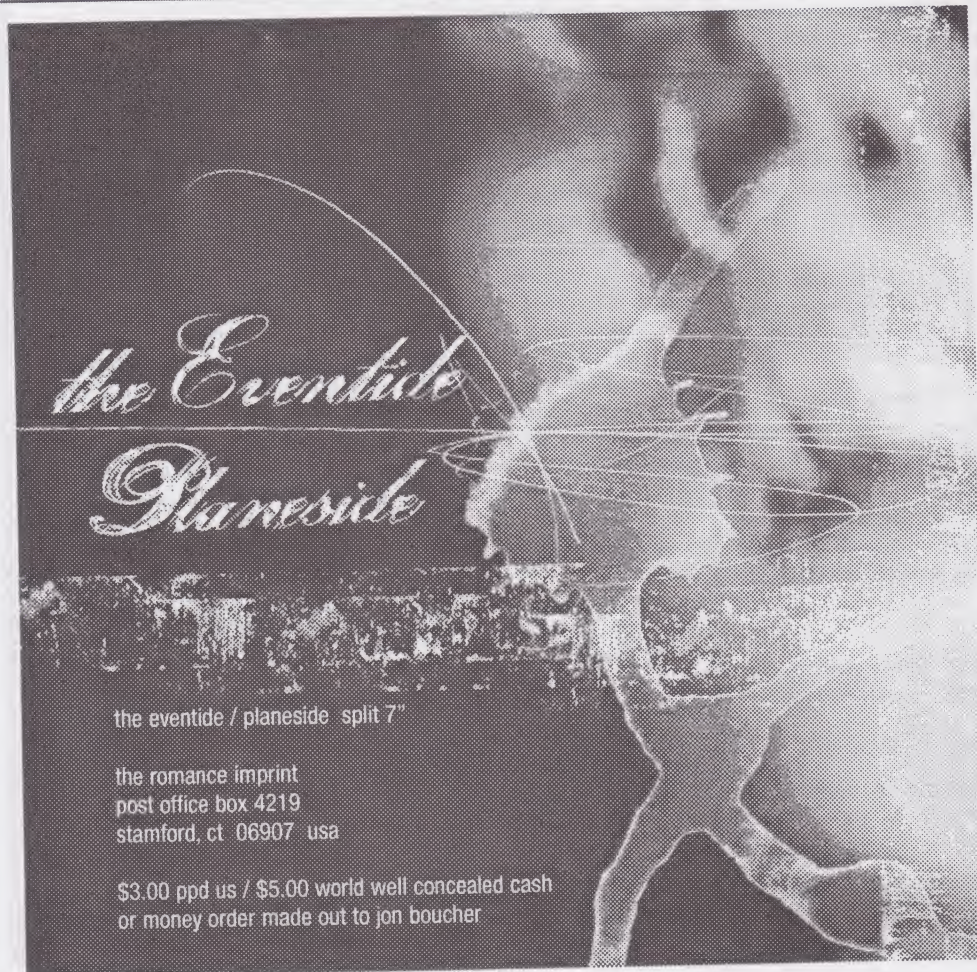
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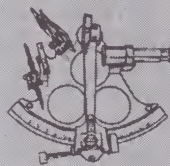
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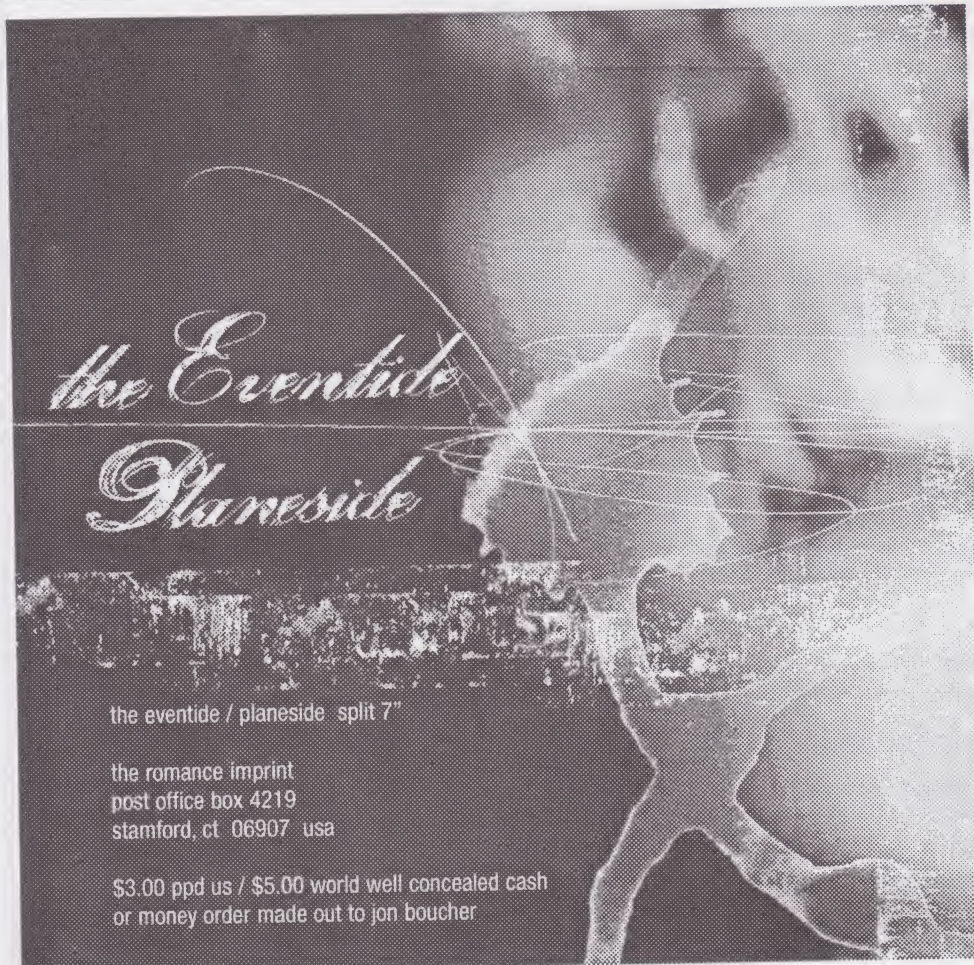


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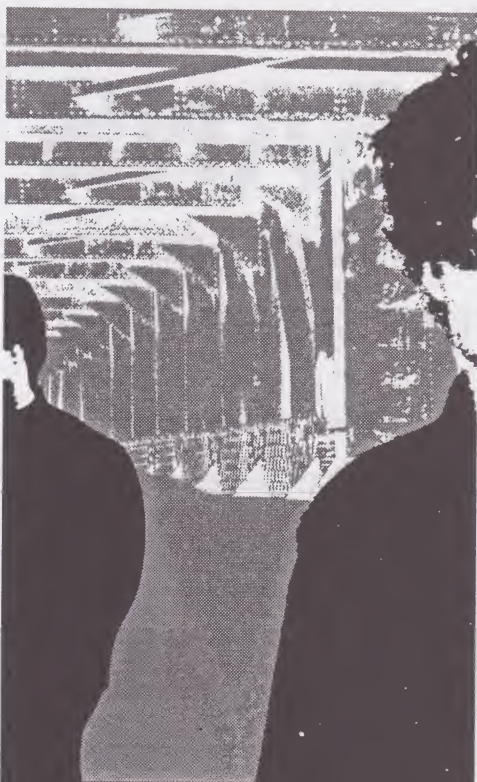
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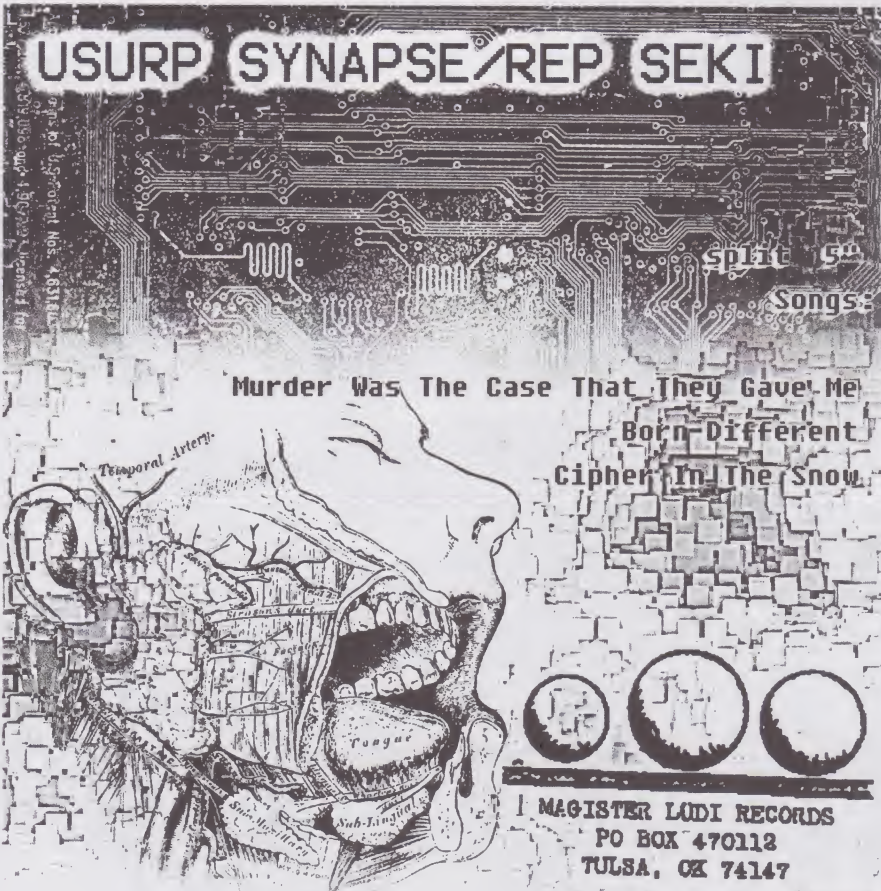
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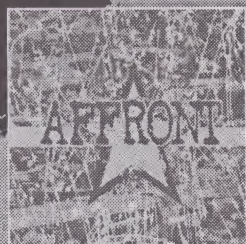
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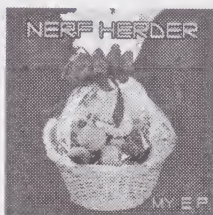


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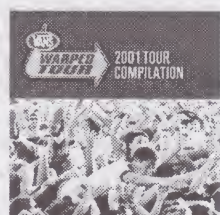


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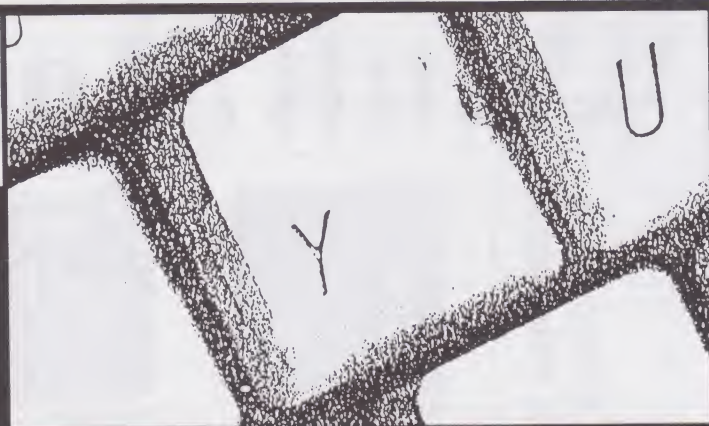
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PAPER ZINES



Active Transformation, Vol. 3, Issue 3 This anarchist newspaper RULES. It always has good articles on current events in the general leftist activist arena. Subscriptions to the bimonthly publication are \$6 in the US, but it's free if you see it in stores or at shows. Good record stores and book shops should look into carrying it - \$5 gets you 20. Active Transformation gives you the news you need that you won't get anywhere else. (RB) Detroit AT, PO Box 11508, Detroit, MI 48211

Alarm #8 This is a quality zine if I ever wrote for one (which I do...). Alarm has a very similar setup to PP but has a very clean and varied layout style that is quite soothing to the eye. It's standard in setup to music zines but is filled with good interviews, amusing columns, music reviews that cover more than just HC, punk and indie (just a little bit but that is creditable in itself). Good writing, good times and some other good stuff with interviews with ATDI, Cave In, Drowning Man and Ron Sakolsky. Check it out. (DM) \$3 ppd., PO Box 200069 Boston, MA 02120 USA

Avow #10 A cool little zine with a neat cover and lots of interesting, personal stories inside. There's a certain voyeurism to reading zines because their creators are usually pretty open about their lives. Inside is a story about a girl (natch), wondering where Suzanne Vega is and one on growing up and giving in. Lots of cool illustrations (the editor is a painter), lots of reviews and insightful writing. (KR) \$2 Keith Rosson, 20 NW 16th Ave., #306, Portland, OR 97209

Dunk And Piss, #4 Small, personal type zine where the writer essentially describes things going on their life and a few other humorous bits. (AS) 11 Alger Dr., Rochester, NY 14624

Emergency Instructions #1 This is the travel zine starring Sophia as she drops out of school and decides to go to Europe instead of pursuing college. See her experience Norway and all it's wonders, see her rudely waken up why Norwegian Gap ravers, feel what it's like to be a stranger in a strange land, read her feelings about Norway and life. All this and more in EI #1. It's a decent read as well. (DM)

\$1, 537 W. Melrose #440, Chicago, IL 60657

Fracture #16 Great zine with two interviews worth the \$3, easily. When was the last time someone had the smarts to interview Ben Deily from the Lemonheads, instead of Evan Dando? It even got me to pull out my Lemonheads records to remember that they had some great songs. The Protagandi interview was a really good read. Did you think they would still be around six or so years ago? You also get all of the typical zine stuff - good columnists, reviews, polls, etc. It is great to read a European view of many US bands. (EA) PO Box 623 Cardiff, CF3 4ZA Wales, UK

Fifteen Dollar Christmas Tree #3 Inside, beside email forward jokes that I've had forwarded to me a couple of years back on several occasions, you may find angry reactions to the "alternative", a poem about rat poop, some mazes and the value of time. I have nothing witty to say about this zine. Get a copy of it and make fun of it yourself. (DM) C/o Amy, 190 Greycourt Chester, NY 10918

Fifty-Seven #2 Hmmm, well I have to give the people behind this zine credit for covering the Tucson, AZ scene, however it is a bit bland. Some of the attempts at humor are pretty amusing like why Bush is a good president, but it's predictable as whole. Interviews with the Blacks and the Weird Lovemakers, music reviews, movie reviews, sci-fi rantings and drawings and some other stuff. An interesting fact is that this is the second pressing so some people seem to dig it. It does come with a free sticker though! (DM) PO Box 1171 Tucson, AZ 85702-1171

Here Be Dragons #8 Subtitle: "a political fanzine." Thanks for the disclaimer. This is 44 pages of economic and social analysis of everything zines so love to dissect—the system, the punk community, etc. There's an interesting column about the role of profit in the punk community. Lots of columns and anarchist rhetoric. (KR) \$1 H.B.D. PO Box 8131, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Hystera #1 Good writing is a rare thing when it comes to zines. That doesn't mean the bad ones are without merit; it just means you

appreciate the ones that can write. Like this one. Half-page, side-stapled with minimal design, it's not something that will catch your eye. But open it up, and there's a great story that takes body parts and matches them with anecdotes (ears, thighs, etc.) that's intimate and refreshingly well-written. There are also recipes, a belly-dancing story, a couple of reviews and an interview with BS2000. (KR) No price given. hystera@bust.com

Impact Press #32 So this zine has tons of music ads, but the only music you'll find in it is a pretty hefty reviews section. The rest of it is devoted to activist culture, from dry (but informative) stories on downed animals, the falun gong, oil exploration and gun control. The Jefferson quote on the masthead is awesome, but the tone of a couple of the columns seems oddly reactionary. (KR) \$2, 10151 University Blvd., Orlando, FL 32817

Inkling #4 This wins the coolest-looking-zine award for this issue. Lots of cool illustrations, and it's held together by string. The stories are all personal in nature, from one about a man leaving his pregnant girlfriend to the sounds of your neighborhood. Interesting, and it's pleasing to look at, something that's rare for a zine. (KR) Melissa Klein, 3288 21st St., #79, San Francisco, CA 94110

Jersey Beat #68 This zine covers most things punk under the sun. The not-so-flashy music mag boasts interviews with xbxrx, Avail, and the Queers this time around. They review new records and contributors also have little blurbs on what they're into or have seen or heard recently. Decent, but costly. (RB) \$3, 418 Gregory Avenue, Weehawken, NJ 07087

Kiss A Dead Kid #1 First off, Congrat's to Adam Kiss A Dead Kid for making this his first zine ever. This has to be the best looking zine I've ever seen. A stenciled cover, a brilliant cut and paste job layout, color inserts, stapled proof pictures (I got a picture of old people!), A stapled answer sheet to a questionnaire, punk rock Mad Libs, instructions on how to build a kite and many other wonderful things within these pages. There are stories about striking kids from yesteryear, an article/ statistics about violence

and abuse against women, a My So Called Life trivia quiz, how to help a choking cat, and a chock full of other stuff. This is generally a lighthearted zine and a fun and informative read. Visually, this is fucking awesome. Truly, this is awesome and worth a hell of a lot more than what's being charged. Get This! (DM) \$1/ \$1+2 stamps by mail, 111 n. Rowland St. Richmond, VA 23220

Law of Inertia #9 A huge zine with tons of interviews, reviews, stories and all kinds of stuff. This issue has Death Cab for Cutie, Propagandhi, Dillinger Four, This Year's Model and a bunch of others. For the most part, it's well-written, and there's just so much to read. Let it not be said it suffers from a lack of ambition. (KR) \$3, 61 E. 8th St., #125, New York, NY 10003

Motion Sickness, #11 Good read, punk rock fanzine. Interviews with old school vets like 7 Seconds and Steve Soto (Adolescents, 22 Jacks) and newer bands like Dillinger 4. And articles on the Las Vegas Shakedown, restaurant etiquette, and reviews and columns and more. (AS) PO Box 24277, St. Louis, MO 63130

The New Scheme, #2 Another MRR styled zine. Well written and laid out. Interviews with Al Burion of Burn Collector and Milemarker, Evil Design, Waxwing, Cave-In, and Eight Houses down...glad to see not just bands, but writers, studios, etc. Record reviews, columns, etc. (AS) PO Box 19873, Boulder, CO 80308

Penny #1 This is an impressive zine brought to you by the creator of the Handbook of the Recently Deceased. It's pretty much a personal zine with thoughts, events in history, the leading up to the birth of his son and events from high school among other items of interest. There is even an interview with PP's Dan Sinker at the end of this zine. The zine in itself is worth a read, but it also comes with a CD comp featuring some great music from bands you may not have heard of and a few you may have. However the majority of this comp rocks with the likes of Splinter Faction, Straight Edge Crack Whores and the Stopgap Measure. So good, so good. (DM) \$3, thehandbook@hotmail.com

Prophecies from the Children of Cain #6 This used to be called Liquid Foundation. This zine offers clear and concise writing on a range of good subjects of resistance. It begins with a good breakdown of what global free trade really means and why exactly it is bad. All in all this is an easy read that is wonderful for the newcomer and jaded old activists alike. (RB) Justin Conlon, 160 Summit St. #1, Hyde Park, MA 02136

Rat Blood Soup, #6 Formerly "willzine". This is a pretty good humor zine, dark

humor that is. Its thirty-eight pages include entertaining pieces about abusing Nike, temp jobs, cover bands, and more. (AS) \$2, 6359 Lancaster Ave., Philadelphia, PA 1915

Rebel A-Go-Go #2 I can't knock this zine too much. It's kind of muddled and not too in-depth on any one topic or interview but the integrity is there. Interviews with the women behind Bust and Rockgrl magazine along with some show reviews. If Maggie Mae of Rebel A-Go-Go continues with this zine, this could be a decent read. (DM) PMB 278, 6523 California Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98136

Recluse #1 A new zine from Ohio with lots of columns, personal writing, reviews and animal welfare stuff. There's an interesting column about women's roles throughout history, which segues into a personal column about family relations. It's your standard zine fare, but it's written well enough to keep you interested. (KR) \$1 and a stamp. PO Box 09558, Columbus, OH 43209

Reglar Wiglar #15 If you're into comics, you'll probably like this. It features an interview with Dan Clowes (for you comics geeks) and tons of cryptic, somewhat amusing comics. There's also an interview with Beluga Records, metal band Lamb of God and reviews. The writing's OK but nothing incredible. (KR) \$2, PO Box. 578174, Chicago, IL 60657

Round Things Roll #3 This is a travel zine with some interviews. Interestingly enough the interviews are primarily with acoustic musicians including John Darnielle of the Mountain Goats and a group interview with the members of Delta Dart, David Dondero, Lucas Bernhardt, Mike Ray and Allison Williams. There's also a lot of stories about traveling and touring across the US. You can read what it's like to tour with Shut The Fuck Up or read about 50 short stories in 50 different states or Allison Williams tour stories. There's a whole lot of good punk rock going on here. (DM) PO Box 11384 Portland, OR 97211

Stage Dive #1 This has a couple of interviews in here with the Nerve Agents, Lance Mountain, Rev Rec's and the history of Judge. S.D. is alright to this point however, this zine has some great old photos of all your favorite HC bands like YOT, GB, Underdog, Token entry and a bunch more with some newer talent like Buried alive and Floor Punch. The photo history makes checking this zine out worth while. c/o Larry Ransom II, 130 Windermere Rd. Lockport, NY 14094 USA

Straint #1 A quick read with a very engaging intro that the rest of the zine doesn't live up to. The intro is a well-written analysis of the meanings behind phrases like "growing up"

and words like "liberation" and the role males play in various counter cultural movements. What follows is a small story on Valeska Gert, an amusing "Stay in Tucson Bored Game" and an excerpt from a book about how males in relationships can help when their partner is sexually assaulted. (KR) \$1 Lane Van Ham, 306 N. Euclid, Tucson, AZ 85719

Supreme Nothing A little zine with little type and precious little good content. It's filled with old journal entries, old school assignment on how New Kids on the Block were great, old letters... 60 pages of this sort gets really dull. A lot of resolving the past might have been accomplished though, and maybe it can help you do the same. I think the moral is that the author's life is a Supreme Nothing, though, and I can't dig that negativity. (RB) Denny, PO Box 211, Burton, OH 44021

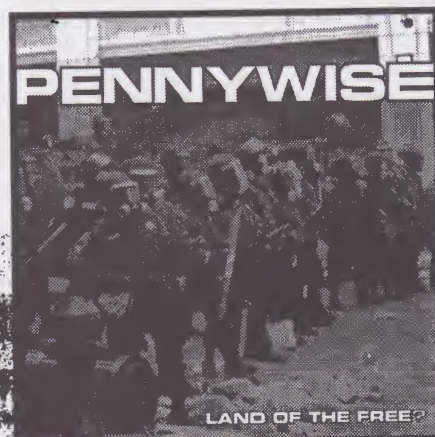
Tape Op #23 On the heels of their great book, Tape Op does not disappoint again. Like every issue you get the great questions and answers of audio recording. Still has a lot of analog, but lets face it, Tape Op is about doing what you can, with what you have. There are no absolutes, except that no producer/ engineer can turn crappy songs/sounds into gold. This is the best recording magazine out there. If you are in a band, record bands, or really like listening to music, than you will get a lot out of this magazine. I highly suggest the Tape Op book to everyone. (EA) www.tapeop.com

The Wanker, VOL 1, #12 Nov 15-22 This is fucking hilarious! This is quoted on being "Seattle's Premier Adult Content Weekly for Teens" and rightfully so. There's a lot of fake ads that are just vile, articles that are just ridiculous attempts at news (which is intended), and some crazy adult ads that I can't say as not to ruin the surprise. Ok, how about the Charlie Brown butt plug or the hand of Mother Teresa to masturbate with. This is quite un-PC but that is what makes this great. To get this however you have to get another paper. Write to this paper for details. (DM) 2212 Queen Anne Ave. N #512, Seattle, WA 98109, gclark@speakeasy.org

Wild Children #2 This is a emo pocket zine if I ever saw one. Kind of new age feeling when our writer Scott talks about his feelings. There's some life experiences in here and a typed part that's written in a different writing style without any writing credits at the end. If our creator of WC wrote this piece, here's to you for being able to change your style. Otherwise, shame, shame, know your name. Overall, decent effort, here. (DM) stamps, c/o Scott 545 Calle Del Norte Camarillo, CA 93010

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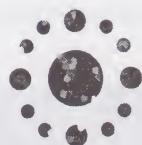

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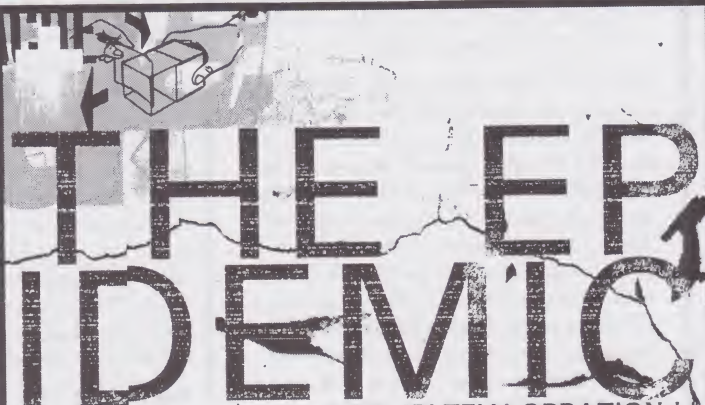


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The Ralph Nader Reader

Ralph Nader
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In case you missed it in all the post-election sniping over Ralph Nader and the restoration of the Bush dynasty, Seven Stories Press has given us 440 pages by which to judge the man. From this, disciples will draw the sacred oils to anoint the feet of their leader, while foes will find the fuel for torches and smudgepots as they smoke out the great bourgeois reformer, unrepentant leftist, Cassandra of corporatism, riding-horse of racism, or whatever it is Nader is being accused of this week.

Pardon me if that sounds a bit cranky. But after reading a sheaf of Nader broadsides, it's the tone best suited for discussion of his work. Truth be told, the book reads like a rush job to hit stores before the election. From essay to essay, there's often a repetition of rhetoric and example that seems less the product of an internally consistent body of thought, and more the result of a writing life squeezed by the demands of the rubber chicken circuit and its need for a body of factoids that can be used one appearance after the next. This is to say nothing of Nader's efforts as "co-found[er of] numerous public interest groups," since *The Nader Reader* has very little to say about them either, except to identify a problem and to note that an organization was started to address it.

Having read *The Nader Reader* from cover to cover, I feel safe in saying that if an essay starts to remind you of the one you just read, you can probably skip it with no harm done. The more beguiling

problem is the book's failure to provide any historical context to evaluate the purpose or efficacy of Nader's words. The pieces are presented without introduction, with publication dates slanting heavily towards the '90s, and a near-total omission of writing from the mid-'70s to the late '80s. The result is a book obviously cooked for the anti-globalization crowd. If, like me, you grew up in the 15-year period when Nader apparently wrote little worth collecting, *The Nader Reader* won't explain what Ralph was doing in all that time. Nor will the book give you much sense of the consumer movement that preceded it. If you weren't around for the New Left, the period during which Nader's muckraking journalism took on titans like GM and won reforms, then you may find it very difficult to connect the effusion of baby boomer progressives to Nader's dunworthy prose.

To understand any of these things, save yourself the \$20 and check out nader.org, where eight chapters from the political biography, *Citizen Action: A History of Ralph Nader and the Modern Consumer Movement*, are printable.

The best synopsis of Nader comes from Edward B Rust, former president of the US Chamber of Commerce, who notes, "The whole point of Nader—so obvious that it is often overlooked—is his single-minded dedication to making the free enterprise system work as it's supposed to." *Citizen Action* excellently maps out Nader's critique of "corporate socialism," a critique that seems to spit at socialism, and the privatized profits and socialized costs of corporations, with equal

vehemence. Nader expects both to take a loyalty oath: socialists, for reasons warmed over from '50s witchhunts; corporations, to keep their profits and their factories in America. Contrasting himself as a model of service and discipline against the free-think and freedo of the 1960s counterculture, Nader appeals to professionals to recognize a calling higher than economic self-interest—that of "public citizenship." The conservative cultural politics at the core of this vision should give pause to anyone who speaks of him, the Green Party, and the left interchangeably.

Crack *The Nader Reader*, dig my man on popular culture, and you realize he, Al Gore, and Dubya could break bread on the evils of Limp Bizkit and the need for a cultural cleansing to prevent the moral apocalypse posed by wayward youth. Putting the weight for the degradations of corporations on youth rather than the adults who work for them is questionable, as is the proposed solution: a restoration of parental authority and nuclear family values. The arguments Nader makes are essentially moral ones, but unlike the civil rights movement of his generation, Nader bases moral authority in Americanism and acknowledges no higher calling. While allowance may be made for the time in which Nader was writing, the fact remains that these pieces are chosen to represent his beliefs now. All of which gives *The Nader Reader* a dated quality, with an ethic that owes more to *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* than the New Left, and a politics that gains vitality only by contrasting itself with strong, countervailing options.

—Aaron Shuman

Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth*
 Edited by Peter Glassgold
 Counterpoint Press

Peter Glassgold's timely compendium of articles from Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth* directly addresses the concerns of the post-Seattle left. Glassgold begins by providing an informative contextual essay that helped to dispel my own ignorance concerning the social upheavals of the early part of the 20th century and Goldman's industrious grass roots efforts to understand them. Despite knowing who Emma Goldman was, I had no idea, that with the aide of Alexander Berkman and Max Baginski, she spearheaded a well-read radical magazine that dealt with such issues as unfair treatment of labor, birth control, global capitalism, freedom of speech and avant-garde art. With the revival of interest in anarchism by labor rights and anti-globalization activists, this book couldn't have a better audience in waiting.

In Glassgold's excellent introduction he outlines *Mother Earth's* history. The entire evolution of the magazine was interwoven with Goldman and associates' political activism and social protest. Both Goldman and Berkman were repeatedly imprisoned for their radical activities. The two were eventually deported to Russia for their anti-conscription activism during World War I. The US Post Office frequently confiscated *Mother Earth* and gave lists of their subscribers to Federal Agents on witch-hunts for radicals. *Mother Earth* writers were actively involved in public protests, giving speeches around the country on behalf of protestors and anarchists indicted during the "anarchist scare" of the early part of the century. Goldman even had the strength of character to write an essay on

behalf of Leon Czolgosz, a young anarchist arrested for the assassination of President William McKinley. For her efforts, she was frequently harassed by Anthony Comstock, head of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice who was hilariously lampooned in *Mother Earth*. Colorful figures abound such as Ben Reitman, King of the Hobos, a high-school dropout who became a doctor. He was Goldman's partner in crime for a time, and ended up beaten and left naked in the desert by a murderous mob in collusion with the police in San Diego while accompanying Goldman on one of her tours. All this and more is summarized in the introduction, which is worth the book's price alone.

Glassgold shrewdly divides the selections from *Mother Earth* into six sections, based on subject matter. These are "Anarchism," "The Woman Question," "Literature," "Civil Liberties," "The Social War," and "War and Peace." The section on Anarchism explains the basic philosophical tenets of the movement and associates it with Free Communism. It also includes sketches of some important figures in the movement and an excellent historical essay by Voltairine de Cleyre tracing American Anarchism to the Revolutionary Republicans and Jeffersonian democracy. Other relevant historical issues such as the Paris Commune and the important figures of Francisco Ferrer and Mikhail Bakunin fill out this section. The memoir of Bakunin is particularly interesting in its critique of Marx as a political figure with some rather oblique references to the differences between communist anarchists and Marxists.

The "Woman Question" mostly deals with feminist concerns of the time: birth control, marriage, prostitution and

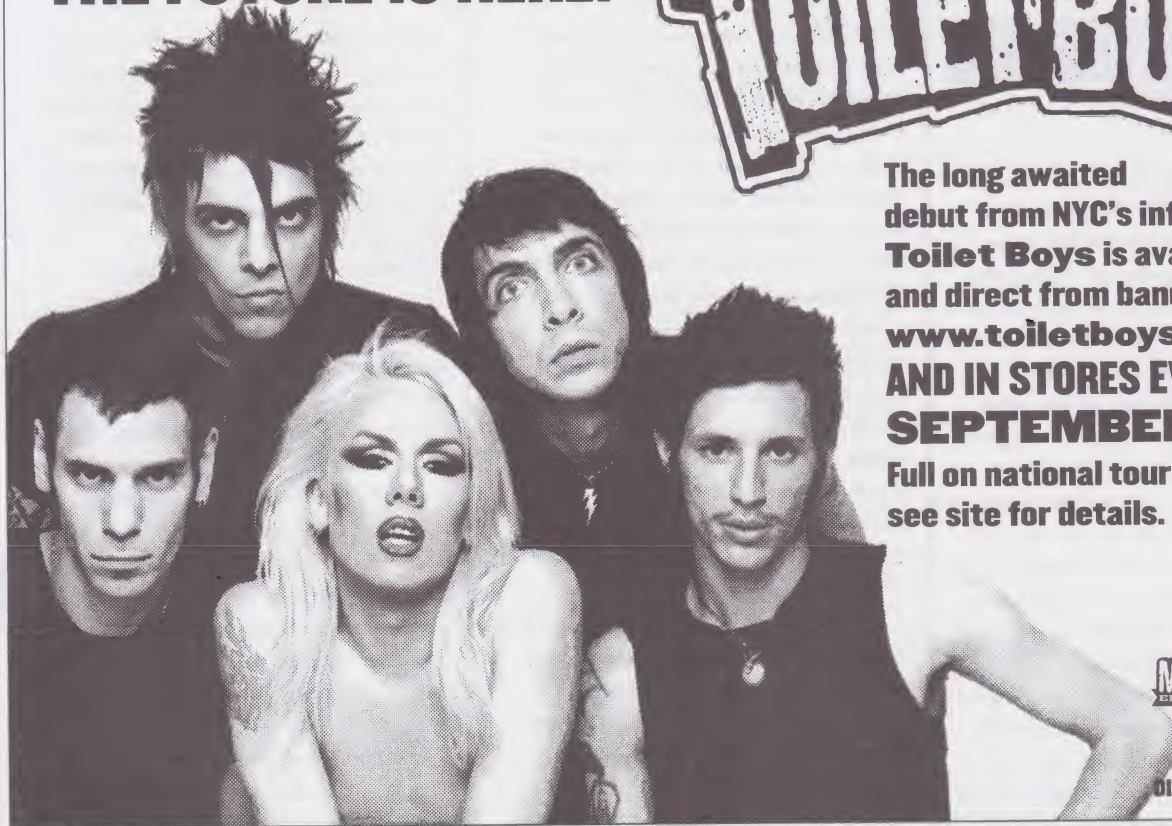
eugenics. Marriage and prostitution are consistently portrayed as institutions of economic exploitation by both de Cleyre and Goldman. I was surprised to learn that the phrase "birth control" was coined by Robert Allerton Parker, whose work also appears in this section. Peter Kropotkin's lecture to the Eugenics Congress in London in August of 1912 critiques scientists advocating sterilization concluding, "And then, once these questions have been raised, don't you think that the question as to who are the unfit must necessarily come to the front? Who, indeed? The workers or the idlers? The women of the people, who suckle their children themselves, or the ladies who are unfit for maternity because they cannot perform all the duties of a mother . . . Those who produce degenerates in the slums, or those who produce degenerates in palaces?"

While I could exhaustively continue to describe *Anarchy's* content, perhaps a good place to finish would be to draw attention to the book's one documentary moment. The center of the book contains original *Mother Earth* cover art by seminal modernists like Man Ray, as well as photographs of writers and editorial staff. The inclusion of these brief snapshots helps underline the sense that *Mother Earth* was more than just a journal of radical commentary. It was also an enormous cultural event produced by a really eclectic group of people who lived out their radicalism in every possible way, interpersonally, artistically as well as intellectually. If ideology truly has physical forms, these pictures certainly attest to that. I can't think of a more convincing means by which to breath new life into an old revolution. Why no one ever thought of bringing out a collection like this until now is truly beyond me. —Bill Mitthoefer ©

All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we receive will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to plunk a needle down on a record and write a snappy capsule. If you'd like to have your book reviewed in Punk Planet, please mail it to: Punk Planet attn: Book Reviews PO Box 464 Chicago IL 60690 if you want anything else reviewed, please mail it to the reviews address given at the front of the magazine.

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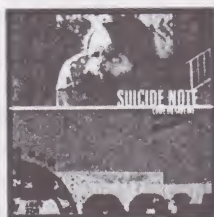
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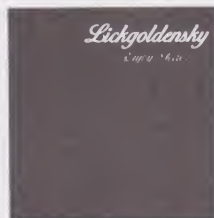
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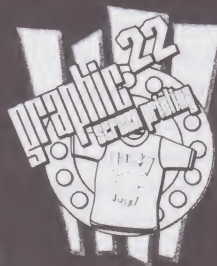
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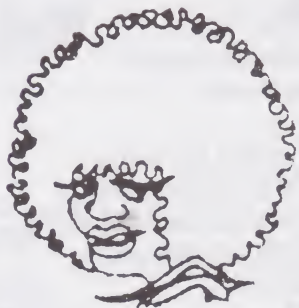
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PP31 features a talk with FUGAZI and DISCHORD RECORDS frontman IAN MACKAYE. Also interviewed in this issue is THE AVENGERS' PENELOPE HUSTON. Additionally, there are talks with TEO LEO, ICU, LIFTER PULLER, and OÁLEK. Punk Planet #31 also looks at the OEO KENNEDY'S LAWSUIT—this article sheds light on the bizarre situation that has arisen to pit former bandmates against each other. PP31 also takes a look at THE POSSIBLE CLOSING OF GILMAN STREET, MAIL ORDER BROS FROM RUSSIA AND LIVING WITH CHRONIC CYSTITIS. Plus, columns, reviews, DIY and much much more 136 pgs.

PP32 takes a personal look at the Kosovo Crisis. A moving, troubling and angering piece, LIFE DURING WARTIME: LETTERS FROM THE KOSOVO CRISIS will not allow you to look at the news the same way. In addition to these gripping letters, PP32 also features an interview with K RECORDS' CALVIN JOHNSON. Also interviewed in PP32 are NEUROSIS, ORI, MURDER CAN BE FUN FANZINE's John Marr, THE ETERNALZ, ASPHOEL RECORDS, SUBMISSION HOLD, and eclectic art mailorder CATCH OF THE DAY MAILORDER. In addition to all these interviews, Punk Planet #32 features articles the COMMUNITY RADIO MOVEMENT IN WASHINGTON DC; MULTIETHNICITIES IN MODERN CULTURE; and a revealing look at GENTRIFICATION IN TODAY'S URBAN AMERICA. Plus much, much more. 144pgs

PP33 Sept/Oct. 1999 takes a peek at the GROWING HACKTIVIST MOVEMENT. Hacktivism has brought civil disobedience to the Internet. Also in this issue, filmmaker JEM COHEN TALKS ABOUT MAKING INSTRUMENT, THE FUGAZI DOCUMENTARY. In addition, PP33 features interviews with JAOE TREE RECORDS, THE MELVINS, OLD TIME RELIQUIN, ALKALINE TRIO AND EUPHONIE. Articles in this issue include "Growing Freedom," A LOOK AT A COMMUNITY-BASED FARM IN INNER-CITY WASHINGTON DC; "Ghosts of Tiananmen," AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT TIENANMEN SQUARE 10 YEARS AFTER THE CHINESE UPRISING THERE; "Broken Vows" A COM-

PELLING ARGUMENT AGAINST MARRAIGE; and "A WITCH HUNT IN PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO," a gripping look at the government's persecution of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Plus much more! 144pgs.

PP34 Nov/Dec 1999 takes an in-depth look at THE WARPED TOUR. PP exposes the inner workings and hypocrisy of the so-called "punk rock summer camp." Also in this issue, Punk Planet sits down with WCW WRESTLER VAMPIRO, MANS RUIN RECORDS' KOZIK, SONIC YOUTH'S THURSTON MOORE, THE REP-LIKANTS, CAOILLACA, OPERATION IVY's JESSE MICHAELS and PEDRO THE LION. Articles in PP34 include a look at WOMEN IN THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT, a very moving LETTER FROM PALESTINE, the case against GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD, and a look at DIY PORN ON THE INTERNET. Plus much, much more—except for reviews, which were missing from this issue. Whoops! But hey, it's still a great read at 136 pgs.

PP35 Jan/Feb 2000 the ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE. Headlining this special issue is a rare talk with JOE STRUMMER, the frontman of punk legends THE CLASH. Also featured in this issue, is a rare talk with LUNGFISH. Also in the all-interviews issue, talks with THE NEEQ, AMERICAN STEEL MERGE, the LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER'S DOUG HENWOOD, the MR. T EXPERIENCE'S OR. FRANK, the mastermind behind BIG WHEEL RECREATION RECORDS, POSITIVE FORCE OC's MARK ANDERSON and much, much more. 152pgs

PP36 March/April 2000 Punk Planet #36 takes a long, hard look at THE DEATH OF A PUNK IN AMARILLO TEXAS. Punk Planet writer Chris Ziegler travels to Amarillo, talks to the people involved and writes about the case and its aftermath. Also in PP36 is the story of the WTO PROTESTS in words & pictures. In addition to these two feature stories, PP36 features interviews with MATADOR RECORDS, THE COUP, AK PRESS, DENNIS COOPER, AT THE DRIVE IN, TAPE OP MAGAZINE, LIMPWREST and SARGE's ELIZABETH ELMORE, and many more. Articles in PP36 include moving PORTRAITS FROM IRAQ and a look at the

LUTHER PLACE SHELTER, a shelter for homeless women in Washington DC. Plus there are columns, DIY, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs

PP37 May/June 2000 CRIME AND JUSTICE 2000. In three articles, PP37 takes a look at the sorry state of the American criminal justice system. POLICE BRUTALITY is looked at in the article "War in the Streets." YOUTH ORGANIZING AROUND PROPOSITION 21 is investigated in "No Power like the Youth" and the PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX is exposed in "Crisis and Control." Interviews in this issue include STELLA MARRS; J-CHURCH'S LANCE HAHN; STEPHEN OUNCOMBE, author of ZINES AND THE POLITICS OF ALTERNATIVE CULTURE; the EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE; O AND NOT U; EXHUMED FILMS; HORACE PINKER; and the story of STALAG 13, a Philadelphia-based punk club that was shut down by the city, fought to be reopened and won. Finally, PP37 takes a look at the SAO STATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE and PP takes a peek at the lawsuit between the RECORDING INDUSTRY OF AMERICA AND MP3.COM. Plus more. 144 pgs.

PP38 July/August 2000 VOICES OF THE NEW LEFT. PP takes a look at the new anti-globalism movement. Interviewed in the "Voices" series are NOAM CHOMSKY, JELLO BIAFRA, DIRECT ACTION NETWORK, RUCKUS SOCIETY, QUEER TO THE LEFT and GLOBAL EXCHANGE. Also interviewed in this issue, BOY SETS FIRE, UNWOUND talk about building their new recording studio, post-hardcore label HYDRAHEAD RECORDS, controversial publisher SOFT SKULL BOOKS, MELVINS bassist Joe Preston talks about his project THE THRONES, electronic artist LESSER checks in and art rockers LES SAVY FAY yap at you. Also, PP38 takes a look at the growing RAPTIVIST movement. Additionally, PP38 looks at the GROWING ANTI-WALMART MOVEMENT. Much more. 156 pgs.

PP39 Sept/Oct 2000 Six years after punk "broke" into the mainstream, Punk Planet talks to many of

the bands involved, GREEN DAY, JAWBREAKER, JAWBOX, SAMIAM, GIRLS AGAINST BOYS, THE SMOKING POPES, FACE TO FACE, JIMMY EAT WORLD, TEXAS IS THE REASON. Think you know what happened? Think again. Also in this issue: interviews with KILL ROCK STARS founder SLIM MOON; THE EXPLOSION; MARY TIMONY; SUE COE; ULTRA-RED; OISINFO.COM; and the CENTRAL OHIO ABORTION ACCESS FUND. Articles in this issue include a look at how groups like the WTO ARE EFFECTING THE LIVES OF THE GREAT APES; a report on the CHICAGO POST-ROCK SCENE; and noted economist Doug Henwood writes "BOOM FOR WHOM" which puts a new perspective on the "new" economy. 152 pgs

PP40 November/December 2000. MEET THE NEW BOSS Through interviews with controversial biographers, Punk Planet #40 envisions the hell that the Bush presidency will be—and the hell that a Gore presidency would have been. PP40 also features interviews with INSOUND.COM; The Fucking Champs' TIM GREEN; ELECTRICAL AUDIO; Anarchist theorist JOHN ZERZAN; MARCELLE OJALLO; VERSO BOOKS; MILEMARKER; and MATMOS. Articles in PP40 include a look at the WAR THE GOVERNMENT IS WAGING AGAINST THE NAVAJO INDIANS in Big Mountain, AZ, the PLIGHT OF C NUMBER PRISONERS IN ILLINOIS and a look back at WELFARE REFORM. 152 pgs.

PP41 February 2000 PUTTING ON THE MAP. PP41 takes a look at the history of the DC punk scene. From the influence of the Bad Brains to the birth of Minor Threat; from a violent Ian MacKaye to a not-yet-Rollins Henry Garfield, PP41 offers a revealing and detailed look into punk's past. Interviews in pp41 include: (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY, THE WIPERS, THE LOCUST, TNI BOOKS, and DIY reggae pioneers RAS RECORDS. Articles in PP41 include a look at POETRY SLAMS and a devastating look at the BOMBING OF A COLOMBIAN VILLAGE. Additionally in PP41 is an inspiring talk with SUE MECCA,

a 40-year-old punk rock mom. Plus, DIY tips, columns, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs.

PP42 FINOING LIFE ON DEATH ROW Too often the story of state killing has been told through statistics—these unique conversations with three people who have been to death row (two are still there) bring readers beyond the numbers and into the cell itself. Interviews in this issue include: AMPHETAMINE REPTILE RECORDS calls it quits, SAMIAM, JETS TO BRAZIL'S JEREMY CHATELAIN talks about his solo work, filmmaker ANDREW OICKSON, members of the powerful Seattle band THE GITS look back at the death of their singer Mia, and hip-hop culture mag BLU keeps it real. Also interviewed in PP42 is ALI ABUNIMAH, a young Palestinian activist who has helped turn the media tide during the latest Arab uprising in Israel. Articles in PP42 include a look at the growing anti-psychiatry movement—are drug companies convincing us we're sick in order to turn a profit. The revealing DIARY OF A PHONE SEX WORKER lets readers peer into the world on the other side of the receiver. And PEOAL POWER chronicle's one woman's travels into the radical pro-bike movement. PP42 also includes all the columns, reviews, DIY and more that you've loved over the years. 136 pgs.

PP43 BECOME THE MEDIA PP43's 36 page cover section gives readers DIY tips on how to edit digital video, how to set up a low-power radio station, how to record audio, how to program HTML, how to build a web-based audio feed, how to shoot video, how to program Flash animations and much, much more. In addition to those tips BECOME THE MEDIA also looks at the history of the INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER, who are setting the media world on end. BECOME THE MEDIA also features pieces about YOUTH MEDIA, the ZAPATISTAS AND TECHNOLOGY, NEWSREEL, and COMMUNITY ACTIVIST TECHNOLOGY. This issue is a must have for anyone interested in the new media revolution. Also featured in PP43 are interviews with radical historian HOWARD ZINN, rockers ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT

(fresh off being dumped from a major label), "emo diaries" kingpin OEEP ELM RECORDS, author SHAWNNA KENNY, who wrote I WAS A TEENAGE DOMINATRIX, laptop rocker KIO 606, religious zealots THE CAUSEY WAY, and the masterminds behind the PUPPET STREET PROJECT. Additionally, PP43 features all the stuff readers have come to expect over the last seven years: columns, reviews, and much more.

PP44 THE WEAKERTHANS, one of the finest punk outfits to come along in the last few years grace the cover of PP44. This interview, performed by longtime Punk Planet contributor Larry Livermore, probes the mind of Weakerthans frontman JOHN SAMSON. In their conversation, Livermore and Samson go from poetry to revolution and back again. Truly an engaging and inspiring talk with one of punk's newest heroes. Also interviewed in this issue: MR LAOY RECORDS is profiled through talks with the label owners and the artists they release; futuristic hip-hop duo DELTRON 3030; Pacific Northwest metal punk LOROS OF LIGHTSPEED; electronic music pioneer THOMAS OIMUZIO; HALF JAPANESE's legendary JAO FAIR; Pacific Northwest polit-rockers THE INTIMA; and \$5 CD label PLAN-IT-X RECORDS. Articles this issue include: UNIVERSAL RECORDS ACQUISITION OF E-MUSIC—it may not sound all that exciting, but this business-section errata finds many independent labels not so independent anymore; reporter Heather Haddon looks at the ABUSE OF FEMALE PRISONERS IN AMERICA; new associate editor Chris Ziegler gives a hilarious behind-the-scenes look at SOUTH BY WEST; PP investigates SLAUGHTER OF WILD BUFFALO IN MONTANA; and PUNKS REMEMBER JOEY RAMONE in a moving tribute. All this, plus all the DIY, columns, reviews, and much much much more!

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ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE:

Back to Shatilla

Author Ali Abunimah's website has tons of information about the plight of Palistinian refugees. Visit it at:
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Dump the Pumps

More information about the Yazoo Backwater Pumps project is available at:
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Honduras: the other Columbia

For more information on the situation in Honduras and future human rights and aid delegations, contact La Voz de los de Abajo or Pastors for Peace at p4p@igc.org or 212-926-5757.

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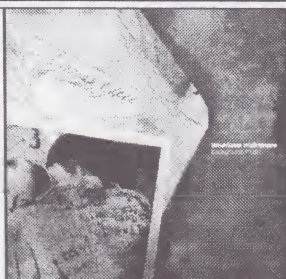
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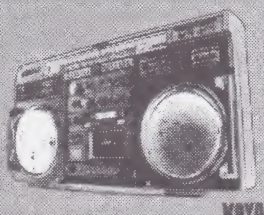
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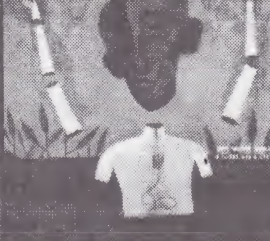
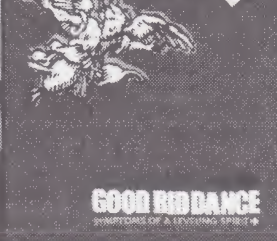
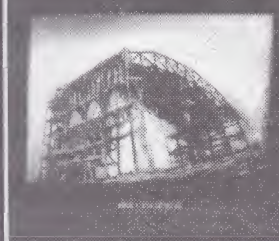
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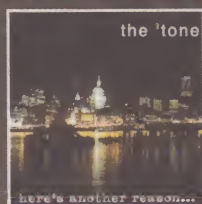
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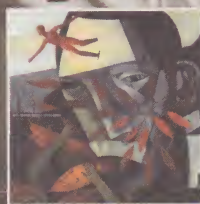
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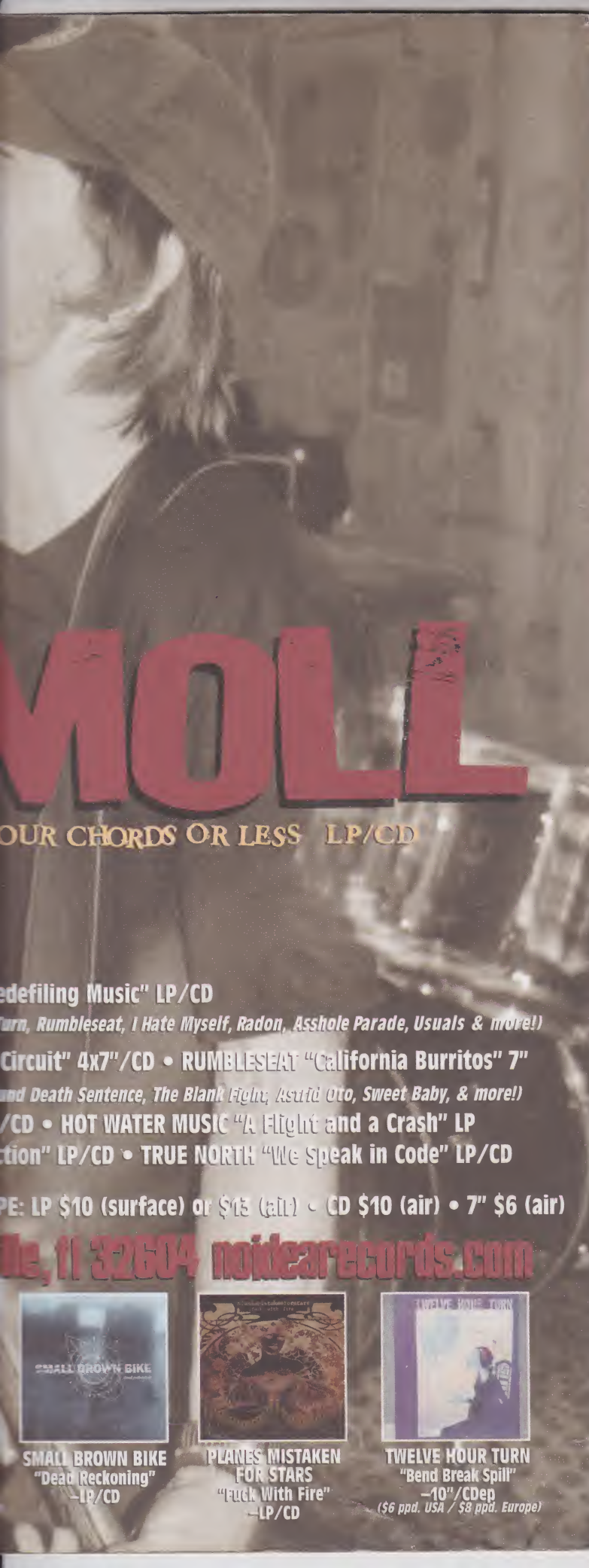
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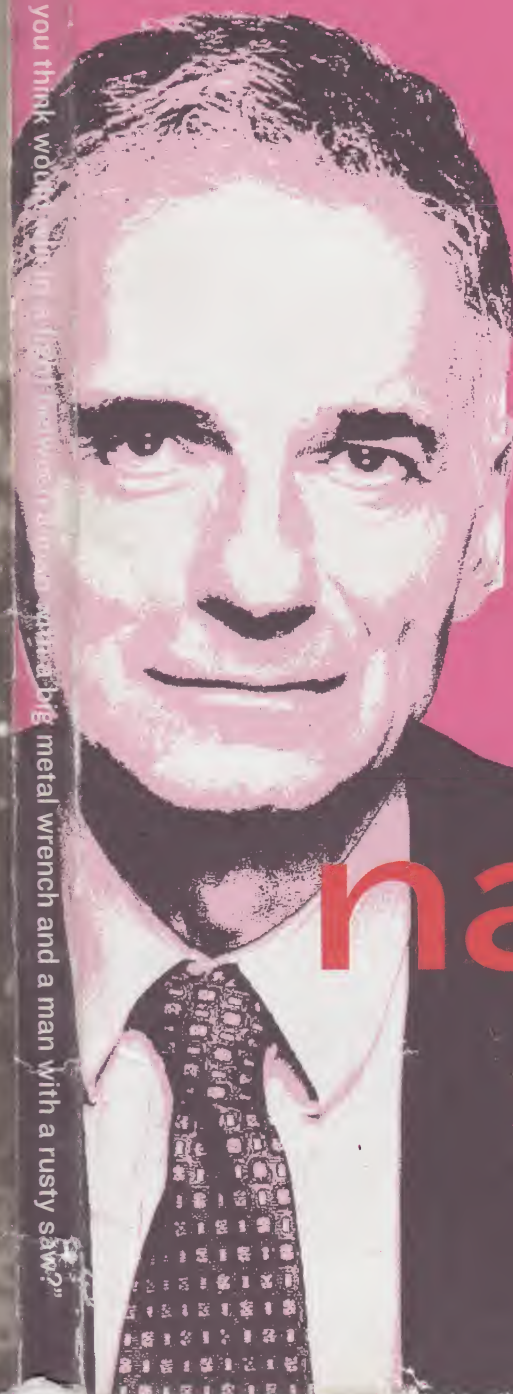
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